



CITY OF LAKES

# Nordic Ski FOUNDATION

YOUTH . EVENTS . TRAILS

## FOUNDATION YOUTH PROGRAMS REACH RECORD NUMBERS OF STUDENTS

*By Margaret Adelsman*

The 2009-10 ski season saw an uptick in energy dedicated to Foundation youth programs. Not only were three previous elementary ski schools prepared for yet another winter on skis, but the Foundation began two brand new programs, one at Loring Community School and the second at Nellie Stone Johnson Community School. UCare once again supported veteran programs at Bryn Mawr Elementary and



*Bryn Mawr Elementary students during ski class  
Photo: Margaret Adelsman*



*Andersen Elementary students skiing at Stewart Park - Photo: Margaret Adelsman*

Pillsbury Elementary. The Carl and Eloise Pohl Foundation funded the ski program at Andersen Open Elementary School and additionally stepped forward to fund the fledgling Nellie Stone Johnson program. Not to be outdone, the Medica Foundation directed its financial resources to the new Loring School program, a collaborative effort between the Foundation and Kids

## 2010 TRAILS WORK

*By Craig Rudd*

With the Junior Olympics coming up in the spring of 2011, there is much work to be done...

Our first priority this summer is to enlarge the stadium. After holding several test events this past winter (the Pre-Loppet, the Loppet, the Midwest Junior Championships and, especially, the Mayor's Challenge) it became apparent that the stadium could use a little work. Specifically, for larger mass start type events with the start, laps and the finish all in the same confines, the stadium needs additional width and some re-configuring. To accomplish this we will be removing a few trees in the southwest (back) portion of the stadium and adding fill in the northeast portion. This will allow us to rotate the stadium a little – so that it will roughly face to

## NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*By John Munger*

The Foundation continues to diversify its activities – with more events, more programs, more trail work, more advocacy, and more ideas than ever before. As always, the Loppet continues to be the driving force behind the organization. But assuming that most people are familiar with the Loppet, this article attempts to focus more on the overall health of the organization, the Foundation's advocacy efforts and the programming work that take up the bulk of the organization's non-event time.

### OVERALL HEALTH

With a third straight good year for the



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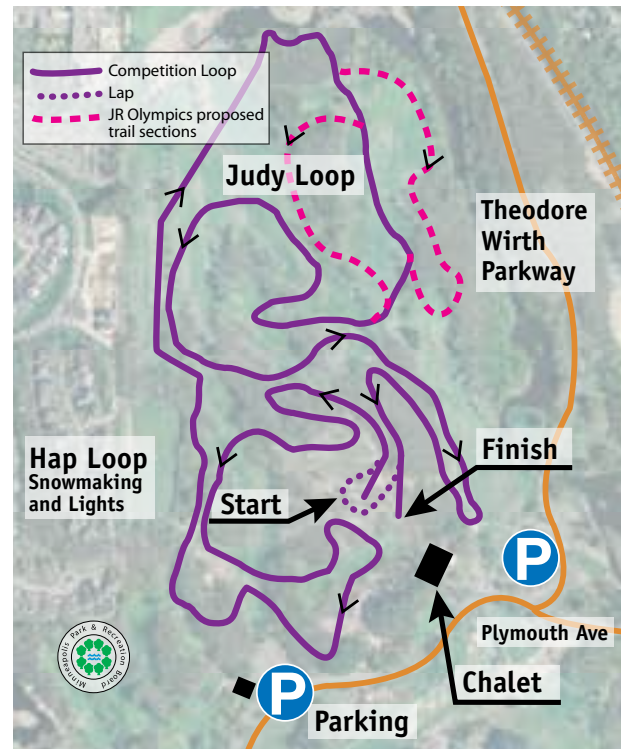
*Trail Work continued from front page,*

the northeast rather than to the east. We are also hoping that this change will serve to soften the somewhat sharp corner that skiers had to make coming out of the stadium this past year. With these changes we expect to have a top-notch stadium ready for all of our events – but especially the Junior Olympics.

Once the snow fell this past fall we discovered another small problem with the Hap & Judy Competition Loops (the 5 kilometer trail that will be used for the Junior Olympics). While the Hap Lutter Snowmaking Loop is 2.5 kilometers on the button, the Judy Loop was only about 2050 meters – about 450 meters short of the 2500 meters necessary to make a 5 kilometer course. Needless to say, we need to correct this problem.

Fortunately, we have discovered a very exciting (and potentially painful) solution, which adds 450 meters to the Judy Loop by utilizing the woods that surround the golf course rather than the golf course itself. First, we plan to extend the “Bassett Creek Loop” portion of the Judy Trails along the creek toward the 11th green. This will add a small flat section to the competition loop, which should help balance the hills everywhere else... After proceeding between the 11th green and the creek, the trail proceeds along the creek for another 100 meters, until finally ascending through the woods on the west side of the 11th fairway. After completing what will certainly become another hallmark Loppet climb, the trail will continue through the woods (with

*Trail Work continued on page 5,*



*Junior Olympic Trail System with proposed sections*

*“The mission of the City of Lakes Nordic Ski Foundation is to promote and support cross country skiing in the Minneapolis area, especially among youth.”*

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# FOUNDATION TO HOST THE 2011 USSA CROSS COUNTRY JUNIOR OLYMPIC SKI CHAMPIONSHIPS

By Michael Bono

The City of Lakes Nordic Ski Foundation is looking forward to hosting the 2011 U.S. Ski & Snowboard Association's Cross Country Junior Olympics (Junior Olympics or JOs). The Junior Olympics will be held in Minneapolis on Theodore Wirth Park's Hap & Judy Lutter Competition Loop next March 7 – 12.

This is a big deal for Minneapolis and for the Foundation! The races are expected to draw between 800 and 1,000 athletes, coaches, team staff, parents, and ski enthusiasts – with thousands of local fans out cheering as well. With ski teams in town for about ten days in total, the JOs is expected to have an almost \$3 million impact on the local economy.

For the Nordic Ski Foundation the Junior Olympics is an opportunity to show off our talented organization and top-notch facilities. Some of the nation's best 14 – 19 year-old cross country skiers will compete. The athletes are divided into two-year age classes roughly correlating to 14-15, 16-17 and 18-19. To attend JOs the athletes must qualify in their age classes in their individual regions. Only the top few skiers in each age class in each region (there are ten regions across the country) attend – meaning that the Junior Olympics is the best of the best and the top athletes often end up on the US Ski Team in the future.

Next year's events will include freestyle sprints (about 1.3 kilometers), a freestyle mass start distance race, a classic individual start distance event and either a classic relay or classic sprint relay.

The Junior Olympic Organizing committee, co-chaired by Kate Ellis and Mike Bono, has been hard at work planning all of the events that surround the races, including the opening and closing ceremonies. The functional committees have been staffed to address the competition management, event operations, marketing and event support services. Each of these functional groups will be reaching out to the community, both skier and non-skiers, to solicit volunteers to assist them with managing the activities associated with their specific functions. In addition to these volunteers, the organization will need many volunteers to help with the variety of events scheduled throughout the week. Opportunities for volunteers are available during the race days as well as for the numerous social events and



Logo: Duffy & Partners

## LOPPET WEEKEND BEST EVER?

For the third year in a row, we celebrated a great winter in the Twin Cities. And for the third year in a row the Loppet celebrated record numbers and happy participants. This year we had about 7,000 registrations for the various events, with 3,800 in the Luminary Loppet alone. Every event except the Finn Sisu Sprints saw record numbers of participation.

More than ever before the Loppet achieved festival status. Throngs of people crowded the ice to watch the Chuck & Don's Skijoring Loppet and the Penn Ice-Cycle Loppet. Skiers and non-skiers alike wandered the Mall admiring the snow sculptures. More than 500 children and thousands of spectators gathered for the Minne-Loppet. Tens of thousands of people made their way through the big tent area at the top of the Mall – and the tent was at capacity for the Post-Luminary party, which featured Bellebottom singing songs from the '70's.

According to survey results, our participants thoroughly enjoyed the weekend. 97.5% of respondents indicated that they would be back for future Loppets and 86% rated the Loppet a 4 out of 5 or better. As usual, the Luminary Loppet was a huge hit. A few comments:

- "The Luminary Loppet is the best event in the Twin Cities. I love it! The lake. The city skyline. The luminaries. The great community feel. It is just beautiful. I loved the fire dancers this year - a great addition. It always makes me glad that I live here. Thank you!"
- "It was the most romantic date I have ever been on. Very well put together and beautiful."

Improvements to the Loppet course were also positively received. 78% of participants thought that the course was "just right" in terms of technical difficulty and 75% thought it was "just right" in terms of physical challenge (up from 69% and 68% respectively in 2009). Similarly, most people enjoyed the new start area as well (though there is room to improve the start of the REI Tour).

There were a few areas in which we could improve. We need reinforced bag tags, we need to consider starting the Tour earlier in order to allow more spacing between the Tour and Hoigaard's Classic participants, and we are considering reducing the number of heats in the Finn Sisu Sprints.

In general, though, it feels like we have a successful formula for the Loppet Ski Festival. After years of tinkering with this and that, the sense is that we are ready for a system. Accordingly, we are investing considerable time and effort in a top secret Loppet manual – with how to's and what for's for almost all aspects of the event. The hope is that this will reduce meetings and make it easier to replace volunteers who need to miss the Loppet on occasion... Let's hope for another great winter in 2011!

ceremonies.

The opening ceremony, hosted by Mayor R.T. Rybak, is scheduled for Sunday, March 6 at the IDS Crystal Court in downtown Minneapolis. We encourage the community to come out for the opening ceremonies to help welcome the athletes and their families to Minnesota.

If you are interested in volunteering or would like more information on the 2011 Cross Country Junior Olympic Championship ski races, please contact Mike Bono at [mbono@brocade.com](mailto:mbono@brocade.com).



Steve Kotvis  
Photo: Celia Davis

## THAT "F-THING" – SUPER VOLUNTEER STEVE KOTVIS

By Sheryl Golin

If you've had anything to do with the City of Lakes Loppet in the past five years you've definitely seen this volunteer around. His name really isn't the F-Thing, but that's what folks have called him when they realize who he is when they see him out there shooting sports shots. His website is named "F-Go", the opposite of F-stop. If you know what an "f-stop is", you'll have probably guessed by now, he's a photographer. And a good one!

When friend and neighbor Peg Galvin called him up five or six years ago she asked him if he'd like to pool his talents with a great group of people, crazy enough to put on a cross-country ski race in the city every year. Could he help them with sponsorship, branding and photography?

Luminary Loppet  
Photo: Steve  
Kotvis,  
f/go Photography

Far from a professional photographer at that time, Steve volunteered willingly, lugging his old Olympus camera alongside him as he trudged the Loppet trail in search of good race shots. Folks were impressed with the quality of his work, and the gentleness of his demeanor - folks like Race Director John Munger.

Steve had such a good time that first year, he has been back every year since. "I hope that the Loppet can become like other sports. Bringing kids and adults together who otherwise would not connect. An afternoon thing where they find friendship, camaraderie. Another method of social networking. A positive one," Kotvis says.

Olympus, Pentax, then Canon. Each year he seems to get a new camera for the event. This year he oversaw a group of photographers, coordinating press credentials and directing photo coverage of all Saturday and Sunday Loppet events.

Early success at the Loppet engaged him more in learning the art and trade of photography. When you speak to him, his passion is contagious. "Imagery is powerful. We want to give positive imagery to these kids. Imagery that helps promote a healthy lifestyle. How do we make "doing stuff" cool? How do we get them outside and off the video games?" he muses.

"I really am jazzed about photographing kids from the Minneapolis Public Schools. I want to take photos of kids who are otherwise overlooked - whose parents may not have cameras. Suburban high school sports have lots of press and photo coverage. Some even have commentators. They already get great exposure. But I am biased to urban schools. I feel like people dismiss kids because they go to "those schools" - that they're a bunch of gangsters or losers or going-nowhere drop outs. But from what I see through the camera lens, that is just not true. When you go to a sport and see these kids, how they are focused, committed, supportive of each other, it's amazing..They are anybody. They are any kid. Why shouldn't they get the same coverage kids in the suburbs do? I think people should see that rather than 'there's another shooting in that neighborhood'.



Those kids should be honored,” Steve emphasizes.

In fact it was the high school quarterback’s mom, in inner-city Minneapolis who called out to him, “Are you that “f thing?” when she realized he was the professional photographer providing free photos of their team, game after game, season after season. She came down from the stands and thanked him repeatedly for his work showing the positive side of Minneapolis youth. “Thanks to you my boys can see themselves and show their friends. It shows other people in the city that our boys are good.”

If you wonder what Steve is up to in the off-ski-season, you can find his posts on Gamefacemn, a part of the Star Tribune website. Steve is a star blogger who sends in positive stories about Minneapolis kids. His photos appear every year in high school yearbooks, and he is a member of the Minneapolis Photo Center, when he is not shooting seasonal sports four to five nights per week.

The Loppet started it all for Steve Kotvis. The first year he didn’t even have his own website. He simply put the pictures on a disc and turned them into the Loppet office. They appeared on the Loppet website and were posted on Bruce Adelsman’s Skinnyski.com. Now Steve has his website up and running (*f/go*) and also runs, Elemenop.com, his advertising business, which he uses to help the Minneapolis Public Schools with image branding.

What motivates Steve to come back year after year to shoot the Loppet? “The people that you get to meet and to talk to, you get to feel a lot of their experience. At the start, you feel the anticipation, the tension, the joy. You see all those people walking up with their ski stuff, probably in the fourth wave and they are so happy to be there. It is so fun to have a reason to have to be in the middle of that. This way I get to be in the essence of it all,”

“At the finish line people are so much fun to take photos of. They basically have been stripped down to their bare selves. Most photographers see people like, ‘How’s my hair? Am I smiling right?’ But when a racer finishes a Loppet, they are completely stripped to their own. They no longer have the capacity to be guarded. They are just trying to survive. When they come across you see and feel their joy, satisfaction, relief. It’s very moving and if you talk to anyone who hands out the medals, they would tell you the same thing. It’s very pure. Really fun. It’s really easy to take pictures of people at the finish line because there are just no pretenses,”

“Capturing the emotion of the racers. Just joy. It’s nice to see someone so satisfied. Why do people get so euphoric over winning the World Series? It’s like finishing the Loppet. It’s intense emotion with no dire consequences. There is no sadness behind it. When you experience something as innocent as pure sport, it is so simple. You can totally embrace it, unabashed and celebrate it. Such a nice relief from the rest of the world.”

*Trail Work continued from front page,*

a dramatic view down to the creek below) before coming out near the 10th green (at the top of the tubing hill). The trail then follows the current 11th fairway trail “backwards” or north toward the creek loop. But before descending back to the creek, the new trail will bend to the east and into the woods on the east side of the 11th fairway. Once in the woods the trail descends again before turning back to the south with another potentially epic ascent. Finally, after leaving the woods the trail re-joins the original Judy Loop toward the top of the tenth fairway.

Once we have the stadium completed, we would like to build a small timing/storage building on the edge of the stadium. This building would be used for announcing and timing at the Junior Olympics as well as at the Loppet, Pre-Loppet and at high school and other races throughout the year. It would also contain a small storage area for cones, banners and equipment necessary to run races. This would make it much easier to set up events without having to drive up and down the steep hill to the stadium area.

Lastly, we would like to increase the width of the trails in a few sections of the Hap Snowmaking Loop. After two years of snowmaking experience we have recognized that many of the trails through the woods become problematic when the snow guns are turned on; ice develops and branches break – causing a mess for everyone. To avoid these problems, we will be working throughout the summer and on Trails Day to prune back all of the low hanging limbs and branches.

Although the main focus of the trail development will be on the golf course in preparation for the Junior Olympics, this does not mean we have forgotten about the remaining trails throughout the park. One specific area that is in need of some trail work is the area of land on the northeast side of Cedar Lake. This area has seen very little trail attention and we hope to work with the folks with the Cedar Lake association to come up with a plan to upgrade the corridor through the woods.

Other areas that we continue to work toward a solution on include: Pisten Bully passable bridges over Theodore Wirth Parkway near the Quaking Bog parking lot and Bassett Creek near the JD Rivers Area and a more permanent connection between the Front- and Back-9 sides of the golf course.

Trail questions or concerns: contact Craig Rudd at 763 242-0176 or send him an email at [craig@finanicalgps.net](mailto:craig@finanicalgps.net)



*Director Notes continued from front page,*

Loppet, the Foundation continues to be in sound condition overall. The organization has built up some cash reserves to protect against the next low-snow year. Sponsors are generally happy and we are working to sign them to long-term agreements. Our grantors have enthusiastically embraced our programming and do not seem inclined to jump ship any time soon. And, according to our survey results, Loppet event participants believe that the Loppet has risen to a new level as an event. (See separate Loppet article).

Still, challenges lay ahead. More than ever before, the organization has been forced to confront the true cost of its events and of running the organization generally. In the past, as a younger organization, the Foundation had been able to get by on more of a shoe-string budget. But as the organization has matured, costs have begun to creep up. For instance, the Foundation has begun to compile a handbook for how to run the Loppet—with the idea being to avoid a loss of knowledge should any one volunteer disappear. But as it turns out, there is a lot of knowledge and expertise involved in running the Loppet—and the cost of gathering the data and compiling the manual has not been insignificant (the manual will probably end up more than 200 pages long). Another example is the Foundation's database. While the database is a significant asset to the organization, it is now too large and too complicated to manage without making a new investment of time and money. On a related note, it is probably time to purchase our own registration software; we have simply outgrown the Actives and Zap Events of the world (most "generic" registration software is based on the premise that registration cost does not matter because it is paid by the participant—not the event—but that is not how we operate). We have only recently begun our investigation of this new software, but the initial cost-estimate is somewhere around \$20,000.

These types of items are not "sexy"—yet they are prob-

ably all necessary expenses. Unfortunately, purchasing all of these "necessary" items now would leave us with little or no cushion against the next bad snow year. So while we are holding our own generally and have "good" problems based upon a maturing organization, we will need to continue to be mindful of our budget as we move forward.

## ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

Most people are familiar with the various core events that that the Nordic Ski Foundation runs. The Foundation's programming is also generally familiar to most Foundation supporters. But the organization's advocacy-type activities are probably a little murkier to those not in the office every day.

The basic idea behind these activities is trying to make our skier-based master plan for the Minneapolis area a reality. Master plan elements include:

- a high-caliber ski trail system connecting north and south Minneapolis and the Chain of Lakes;
- wide bridges capable of allowing Pisten Bully groomers to pass unimpeded over all roads and streams, including:
  - new or altered concrete bridge over Bassett Creek in the Front-9 area,
  - a new bridge across Bassett Creek in the JD Rivers Area,
  - a bridge across Glenwood,
  - a bridge across Wirth Parkway north of the Quaking Bog parking lot, and
  - a better connection between the Back-9 and the Front-9 of the golf course.
- a 7.5 kilometer competition loop in the Back-9/Par-3/Back-40 area of Theodore Wirth Park (that will allow us to attract large national and international events like the World Masters Championships and maybe even a World Cup race);
- a 2.5 kilometer state-of-the-art snowmaking loop with lights (the Hap Lutter Loop);
- a stadium area sufficient to host national events and provide a learning area for new or newer skiers;
- Retention of the natural character of the Theodore Wirth Park area so that skiers, runners, mountain bikers and everyday bikers can continue to enjoy that character as they recreate in the park;
- The addition of an active/silent sports/cross country skiing welcome center that would include a great room sufficient for hosting national events, "club" space, a wax room, a locker room area, office space, a restaurant or concessions area and a bicycle/ski shop;
- Expanded mountain biking, including an introductory area and trails that would provide more aerobic challenge and less technical challenge than the current trails (which are wonderful in

*Trips for Kids: Coach John Swain instructing Pillsbury students before a mountain bike outing  
Photo: Margaret Adelsman*



their own way but are flatter and have scattered technical barriers);

- An “official” half-marathon running/hiking/nordic walking loop through the park so that people can enjoy the trail network without a guide;
- Removal of the asphalt trails throughout the Eloise Butler quadrant of the park;
- Widening/re-grading of the trails in the Quaking Bog quadrant of the park;
- Better signage throughout the park, including Loppet Kilometer Markers.

So how do we advance this agenda? Through a variety of methods. Over the past several years we have raised funds to transform Wirth Park. Through those efforts we have brought the initial phase of snowmaking to the park, we have upgraded the Hap & Judy Trails, added a stadium area and expanded the trail network. We will continue to upgrade the trails this summer (see Craig Rudd’s article on trail work) and will be out fundraising once again to make that happen.

This past winter the Foundation led the effort to procure bonding funds for the Theodore Wirth Winter Recreation Area. This meant working with LHB Architecture on plans for the site, compiling data and presenting to the legislators, frequent trips to the legislature, writing letters, phone calls with legislative leaders, and coordinating the letter and email writing efforts of skiers. In the end, the legislature funded the project but the governor line item vetoed the Winter Recreation Area.

This spring we participated in the Wirth Lake Phase III Citizen’s Advisory Committee – which made recommendations to the Park Board on the land use for the Wirth Lake area. Sounds trivial – but through our participation we will hopefully see a new bridge over Bassett Creek and an amphitheater area where we can hold the Tri- and Trail Loppet award ceremonies and after-event parties. As important as what we gained is what we blocked. The Park Board advocated to turn Wirth Lake into a “wake board park”—complete with a number of mechanized towers permanently fixed in the lake. They also suggested placing a dog park on the west side of the lake, in the Jar Hill area (we have nothing against dog parks – just don’t put them on our ski trails). With our presence on the committee, both of these ideas were soundly defeated.

We continue to meet with LHB to formulate plans to re-develop Wirth Park with active/silent sports in mind. Once we have suf-

ficiently developed those plans we will present them to Park Board commissioners in hopes of convincing them that a silent sports emphasis is the best thing for the area.

Finally, we continue to articulate our plans to Park Board planning staff and commissioners in hopes that, as they continue to focus on Wirth Park, the ski trails become a centerpiece of new development rather than an afterthought.

The commonality here is the Foundation’s role as the voice of the ski community. Maybe because our sport is so individual-based, we tend to disdain too much organization. But without organization, we are just stray voices in the crowd. By acting through the Foundation, we all have more power and influence, which is demonstrated by all that we have achieved to date. Hopefully, by continuing to work together, we can accomplish all of the goals stated above... (along with your ideas – please call 612 604-5331 with your thoughts).

#### PROGRAMMING.

But, of course, advocacy is only a small part of our work. We continue to develop our programming efforts – both for children and for adults. Last year alone, more than 500 students in the Minneapolis Public Schools learned to ski through Foundation programming. As our programs have matured we have begun to look at methods of keeping students skiing through their middle school years and beyond. We have strengthened our Anwatin Ski Team Program and are looking to add a second middle school program at Nellie Stone Johnson. Nellie Stone houses kids in grades K-8 and is adjacent to Farview Park. Farview is hilly and wooded, and the park’s programs are led by Paul Jaeger, who has enthusiastically worked with the Foundation on programs over the past several years. We have also added a chapter of Trips for Kids to our repertoire. (See separate Trips for Kids article). The hope is that with year-round programming we will be able to attract young people to the silent sports world more generally.



*Foundation representatives at a press conference in support of the Wirth Recreation Area bonding bill  
Photo: Margaret Adelsman*



*Elementary youth program student enjoying a snowy outing. Photo: Margaret Adelsman*



*Director Notes continued from previous page,*

Our adult programs have also blossomed. We run various programs through the year – with the Loppet Tri Club in the spring (designed to introduce paddling, mountain biking and some trail running), the Loppet Trail Club in the summer and a growing number of Loppet Ski Clubs (Loppet Ski Club-Introductory, Loppet Ski Club-Fall/Winter and the newly proposed Loppet Ski Club-Summer). In the long term, the idea is to build a ski community that identifies the Nordic Ski Foundation and its activities as “home” for cross country skiing and active sports generally. Some of our master plan items are designed to fit this agenda. For example, an active sports welcome center with a locker room would help club/Foundation members feel more of a sense of place in the park.

#### LAST WORDS.

This continues to be an exciting time to be involved with the Foundation. We are growing, we are successful, and we have much left to accomplish. But make no mistake—to continue to grow, to continue to be successful, and to accomplish all that we want, we need to continue to work together. Your continued volunteerism, continued membership and continued additional financial support are all critical to the Foundation.

If you believe, as I do, that the things we are trying to accomplish are truly important to the broader community, I urge you to renew your membership, peruse the list of Foundation needs (separate short note), continue your volunteer efforts (if interested in committee work or a leadership position, call Margaret (612 604-5332) or me (612 604-5331)), and make an additional contribution to the Foundation. We look forward to working with you again in the year to come and, as always, we are eager to



*Pillsbury student enjoying a spring Trips for Kids outing - Photo: Margaret Adelman*

## TRIPS FOR KIDS CITY OF LAKES BEGINS FIRST SEASON

*By John Swain*

For those who grew up never wanting for basic necessities, it is easy to take for granted childhood experiences like learning to ride a bike. However, not all children are so fortunate, and even in Minneapolis there are children who do not have the resources or opportunity to ride bikes. Lack of biking experience may seem to be the last concern for underprivileged children, but in a society plagued with childhood obesity, scholastic underachievement, indoor electronic entertainment and extracurricular budget cuts, exercise and sports are not unimportant aspects of child development and well being.

The Foundation has been introducing inner city kids to skiing, health and nutrition through its winter programs but until now it did not have a reliable method to help kids continue outdoor sports once the snow melts. This summer the Foundation will be providing Minneapolis youth with the opportunity to mountain bike through the newly renamed “City of Lakes” chapter of Trips for Kids, a national non-profit dedicated to giving kids an opportunity to mountain bike.

The mission of Trips for Kids is to introduce kids to mountain biking and build fitness and confidence as they learn to mountain bike. In addition to accomplishing these goals for their own sake, the Foundation hopes to use mountain biking as a tool to bring kids into the world of outdoor sports so that they will be more likely to try out and enjoy cross country skiing in the winter. Mountain biking is a perfect summer sport to get kids hooked on because it is immediately exciting and challenging but is also accessible to anyone who can bike. Through biking in the summer and skiing in the winter, the Foundation hopes to increase the fitness, health and achievement of inner city Minneapolis kids and turn them into year round outdoor athletes.

Over the winter, the Foundation completed arrangements to take over operation of the Twin Cities chapter of Trips for Kids, which was previously run by employees of Quality Bike Products. Trips for Kids - City of Lakes (TFK-COL) was born, and on Tuesday April 29, eleven students from Pillsbury Elementary School went on the first ever TFK-COL bike ride on the trails of Theodore Wirth Park.

The Pillsbury kids were excited to be on a bicycle field trip. After a brief explanation of bike operation and safety by Foundation trip leaders; they eagerly climbed on their bikes. Most of the kids had never been mountain biking before, and, in fact, several kids hadn't yet learned to ride a bike at all. While the beginners worked





on basic balance, the more experienced riders completed an obstacle course on a grassy field to practice steering around tight corners and riding over logs before proceeding onto the “real” mountain bike trails (constructed by our friends with the Minneapolis Off-Road Cycling Association (MOCA)). The MOCA trails are dedicated mountain bike trails consisting of rolling, narrow, twisting single track with technical obstacles in some places. Although some of the kids were challenged by the trails, they were undaunted and had a great time biking through the woods testing their new mountain bike skills.

In order to allow kids to develop their mountain bike skills and enthusiasm consistently through the season, TFK-COL has scheduled a weekly ride and a series of races to be held on the Wirth bike trails. Additionally, TFK-COL will be offering trips free of charge to youth groups, school groups and all types of youth organizations throughout the mountain bike season.

TFK-COL is looking for volunteer ride leaders this summer. No experience necessary. If you are interested, please contact John Swain at swain@cityoflakesloppet.com or call him 612.604.5333. Or visit us on Facebook at facebook.com/tripsforkidscityoflakes to see pictures, follow the adventures of Minneapolis kids and check for ride updates.

## FOUNDATION NEEDS

As the Foundation grows, the Foundation’s needs continue to grow. Some of the Foundation’s specific needs include:

- Construction trailers for teams to wax in for the upcoming Junior Olympics next March;
- Volunteer help this summer with trail construction (contact Craig Rudd at 763 242-0176 or Piotr Bednarski at 952 237-0765);
- Carpentry supplies or skills for a timing building/storage shed in the new “stadium” area;
- Storage space in the Minneapolis/Golden Valley area;
- Help with the Tri-Loppet, Trail Loppet and Loppet (jobs big and small)
- Committee chairs or committee work for various committees, including:
- Race Director for the Trail Loppet in September
- Race Director for the Pre-Loppet in January
- Race Director for the Midwest Junior Championships in March
- Take on more responsibility with the Loppet:
  - Snow sculpture construction/floors in tents,
  - Mobilization of stuff onto and off of Lake of the Isles,
  - Director of the Minne-Loppet,
  - Chair announcing committee,
  - Course set-up (must actually know course to do this)
- Database management
  - Sponsors
  - Members
  - Contributors
  - Event participants
- Join the sponsorship committee
- Join/chair the awards committee
- Join/chair the marketing committee
- Volunteer with website committee (we have many websites):
  - Cityoflakesloppet.com
  - Tri-loppet.com
  - Trail-loppet.com
  - Jo2011.com
- Midwest Junior Championships
- Mayor’s Challenge
  - Loppet.org
- Volunteer with Foundation youth programming
  - Elementary programs during the winter
  - Trips for Kids mountain bike rides during the summer
- Junior Olympics
  - Facilities Chair
  - Communications committee

Interested in helping? Send an email to info@cityoflakesloppet.com or call Margaret Adelsman at 612 604-5332 or John Munger at 612 604-5331.

## FOUNDATION MEMBERSHIPS

Membership runs from June 1 to May 30. To avoid a lapse in membership, please renew your membership now. Note that all contributions to the City of Lakes Nordic Ski Foundation are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowable by law.

### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION JUNE 1, 2010 – MAY 31, 2011

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The City of Lakes Nordic Ski Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit. Join the Foundation in order to support youth programming and trail development in Minneapolis.

**Basic Level** - Member entitled to newsletters, attend and vote at Annual Meeting, free high-resolution photo file, 5% discount at Finn Sisu and 10% discount on clothing at Gear West.

**Premium level** - Newsletters, Annual Meeting, discounts, free high-resolution photo files, plus \$25 stone grind and thermo-bag treatments at Hoigaard’s (\$70 value).

#### Memberships:

Basic Individual	\$30	\$ _____
Basic Family	\$50	\$ _____
Premium Individual	\$70	\$ _____
Premium Family	\$100	\$ _____
Business	\$100	\$ _____

#### Tax-Deductible Contributions:

Youth Programming	\$ _____
Snowmaking/Trail Development	\$ _____
Athlete Development Fund	\$ _____

**Total Amount of Payment:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(make checks payable to COLNSF)

#### Please return this form to:

City of Lakes Nordic Ski Foundation  
 1301 Theodore Wirth Parkway  
 Minneapolis, MN 55422

Call 612 604-5330 or email info@cityoflakesloppet.com for more information or to volunteer.

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# ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT FUND LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

*By John Swain*

Last fall the Nordic Ski Foundation formed the City of Lakes Athlete Development Fund in order to help support high-level cross country skiers with strong Minneapolis ties. With the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics only months away and a number of local skiers in contention for spots on the Olympic team, the funds were needed immediately for the athletes' final Olympic preparations, travel and living expenses.

The Foundation raised \$2,840 in this initial fundraising drive and awarded grants to Caitlin Compton (Minneapolis), Matt Liebsch (Plymouth, MN) and Johanna (Jojo) Winters (Minneapolis). All three went on to have successful seasons.

Liebsch took advantage of an opportunity to race on his home course and won the Mayor's Challenge Supertour held on the Hap and Judy race loop at Theodore Wirth Park in January. While missing a spot on the Olympic Team, Liebsch raced well enough to earn a start in the pre-Olympic World Cups in Canmore and skied to his first World Cup points in a competitive international field, in the process beating most of the U.S. Olympic team. Liebsch flew back to Minneapolis the day after the World Cup race and, later that afternoon, won the Loppet's Toko/Finn Sisu Sprints. The next morning Liebsch skied to an easy victory in the



*Caitlin Compton at the 2010 Olympics - Vancouver  
Photo: Ben Kremer*

Loppet's Freestyle race. Three days, two victories and his best World Cup race ever. Not bad for a father and husband with two small children...

Compton had a spectacular season as well, clinching an Olympic spot with a second place in the 5 kilometer freestyle race at U.S. Nationals. In Vancouver Caitlin led the U.S. in the 10K freestyle with an impressive 30th place finish and paired with Alaskan ski star Kikkan Randal to finish 6th in the sprint relay, the best ever U.S. women's result in Olympic cross country skiing.

Now that the Olympics are over, most people have forgotten about international ski racing until 2014. But for the athletes, Olympic preparation never stops. In order to build the fitness and technique necessary to be among the best in the world, high-level skiers train year round, year after year. Though there are no Olympic games this year, our local cross country skiers will be preparing all summer and fall, before spending winter on the road competing in races across the United States and around the world. It is nearly impossible to hold a full time job while training and racing, so most skiers must support themselves through a combination of part-time work, sponsorship, prize money and fundraising.

Some may feel like the Foundation should be about underprivileged kids in the Minneapolis schools. That is certainly a top priority. However, those kids need inspiration and there is nothing as inspiring as a successful international athlete from the local community. It is in that spirit that we embark on this campaign to support our best athletes. And, in fact, that community spirit is a big part of our criteria for receiving a grant. Those athletes that have demonstrated a willingness and aptitude for working with inner-city kids are more likely to receive our grant funding. All three of our athletes from last year fit this description. Caitlin and Jojo have specifically worked with our youth programs for a few years now. Matt has also demonstrated a willingness to help talk to young athletes.

Our hope now is to do more than throw a few dollars at the athletes in an Olympic year. We believe that through a systematic long-term approach we can help athletes with a strong Minneapolis connection be the best they can be. And then we can all be proud that we helped them along the way...

If you are interested in helping out, please contact CO-LADF Committee Chair Kuan Teoh: [kuanheidi@gmail.com](mailto:kuanheidi@gmail.com). Help could come in the form of hosting a house party, sitting on the grant committee or, of course, providing a tax-deductible contribution to the City of Lakes Athlete Development Fund. Send contributions to the City of Lakes Nordic Ski Foundation, 1301 Theodore Wirth Parkway, Minneapolis MN, 55422.

## FOUNDATION WORKS WITH MINNESOTA YOUTH SKI LEAGUE TO HOST MIDWEST JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

This past March, the Nordic Ski Foundation and the Minnesota Youth Ski League (MYSL) teamed up to organize the first-ever Midwest Junior Championships. The Junior Championships is a two-day race series designed specifically for younger skiers (15 and under). The first day featured a full-blown sprints competition, with the young skiers qualifying in their age groups and then skiing in a finals competition that varied from 500 meters for the little tykes to a full kilometer for the 14-15 year old age group. After the sprints, the skiers competed in the SkiX-c games, which featured ski soccer and a SkiX-c course, complete with a teeter totter, jumps and slalom gates. The event wrapped up with mass start classic races on Sunday – again organized by age class.

There were two primary thoughts behind the event. First, the Foundation wanted to do a test event in March to help iron out wrinkles in advance of hosting the Junior Olympics next March. Second, there has been a general concern that young Midwest skiers did not ski as far into the season as their counterparts from other parts of the country. For instance, New England does a similar event in March and that event helps spur athletes to ski for a full month after Midwest skiers typically put the boards away...



*Slalom course in X-c games - Photo Phil Bode*

As it turned out, the Midwest Championships were an excellent test event for the Junior Olympics. The Midwest Championships were scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, March 13 and 14. As you may recall, temperatures begin to climb in early March, and by March 7 temperatures were no longer dipping below freezing at all – even at night. Worse, it was raining every day. The rain together with low temperatures above 40 provided a worst case scenario, which was good in a way as it would help the Foundation analyze issues for the big event next year...

When the weekend arrived, it was indeed warm, but it least it was not actively raining. Some 50 die hard children showed up—climbing through mud to reach the relative clean of the ski trails—which still had snow on them, mostly... The freestyle sprints and the X-c games went well on Saturday. Sunday was another matter. Saturday night saw temperatures remaining well above 40; when the Course crew went to inspect the course they discovered a wide swath with no snow and another portion of the trail had a river of water running right across the course. But with a little shoveling and some creatively placed drain tile, skiers experienced a decent, if not perfect race.

“This is skiing in March,” said Chief of Competition Bill Blazar who led a shoveling crew. “It may not be perfect, but it is snow and kids have to learn to ski in any conditions.”

## LOPPET WINS BEST WEBSITE AWARD

The Loppet is one of seven events in the Minnesota Skinnyski Series. This year the Loppet’s electronic presence won the “Best Website” award, given to the event with the best, most comprehensive and most informative website. Michael Meehlhause, the Skinnyski Series Commissioner, presented the award at the April 7 Skinnyski Series banquet, which was held at the Mora Nordic Center.

“This award is a great honor for the Foundation,” commented John Munger as he accepted the award on behalf of Molly Hillstrom, Mitch Vars and Willy Lee, the Foundation’s web team. “We have the best website crew of any ski event. They are all volunteers, they have full-time jobs and little kids and yet they still find time to make the Loppet’s website the best in the state.”



# MAYOR'S CHALLENGE A WET AND WARM WEEKEND

By Ari Ofsevit

After a month of below-freezing temperatures and cool-but-not-frigid (at least for Minnesota) conditions, the trails at Wirth were looking to be in fine shape for the Mayor's Challenge. By the evening before, however, the temperature had nudged above the freezing mark and the Twin Cities were mired in the mistiest, nastiest, grayest day of the season. And, measured against the normal temperature, the two days of the Mayor's Challenge were the warmest of the entire winter.

*But the race must go on.*

On the way to the course on Saturday morning, with light rain and drizzle, you could smell the fluorocarbons rising from the wax sheds. While a mid-January race in Minnesota is usually marked by well-brushed-out Start Green (or something similar), this year would see conditions more fitting of mid-March, or coastal New England. And with many of the top skiers in town, the top-level waxes came out. Thousands of dollars of fluorocarbons were abraded in to the Wirth trails in one weekend. The mornings before the races were a festival of face masks (fluorocarbons are not good for the respiratory system) and rills, and some skis were quite fast.

The snow on the course, however, was rather deep and held up well. The Loppet's grooming force had packed it as much as possible, so while it wasn't particularly firm, it was in excellent shape considering the conditions. (This bodes well for whatever next March brings for the Junior Olympics championships.)

The course many Loppet skiers may be used to was augmented to make it even harder, with a brutally steep hill up the back side of the alpine area. This new hill—Farra's Folly as it has been dubbed (John Farra is the top cross country executive for U.S.S.A.)—which tested the mettle of even the best V1. While there were no particularly long hills, there were many—in a five kilometer course I counted no fewer than nine. Before the race I gave one of my skiers (Mr. Ofsevit is a coach at Macalester College) a course description of “you go down flat, then down a hill, up a hill, down a big hill, up a steep hill, and then down a curving hill. There's a short flat section, then there's the long, gradual replacement for the widowmaker, and then a long downhill. Then you go up a hill, down a new hill [which it turns out was very soft since it hadn't been groomed when it was cold], up a hill, down a little hill and up a little hill and down a curving hill and up a little hill and then down a long hill. Then you go up a big, long hill, across a somewhat flat section, down the sledding hill and then up to the finish.” Got that? And that was in a 5K.

Some 500 skiers participated in the Mayor's Challenge festivities over the weekend, making it one of the biggest, if not the biggest, Junior Olympic Qualifying events in the country. Reviews of the course were generally excellent, with the main “complaint” being that the five kilometer loop seemed to be more like 4.5 kilometers (the winning time for the women's 5K was 12:25 and for the men's 10K was 22:25—which came from hometown hero Matt Liebsch).

The biggest test was the men's mass start classical on Sunday. Some 170 skiers lined up in a “Chevron” style start in the stadium area. The big concern was how the skiers would handle the sweeping turn out of the start and the next two turns through the woods. While the start was certainly cozy, the racers went off without a hitch. Better yet, the course proved excellent for spectators. Fans watched the start and then saw the skiers again at the 500 meter mark as they descended across the snowboard-beginner hill. Spectators that were smart enough to go the top of the alpine hill (behind the stadium area) could follow the skiers through the first 1.5 kilometers, including a harrowing trip to the top of the alpine hill and back down again.

Because the Mayor's Challenge was largely a test event for the Junior Olympics it bears noting how that test went overall. The consensus was that this was a high-caliber course, but that a few tweaks would be necessary to prepare for the big event. First, the stadium could be a bit bigger. Second, the skiers identified a “pinch point” as they wound through the woods in the first half-kilometer. Finally, as noted the course was a bit short. (See Course Article for details on changes expected for this summer).

A bit of snow fell shortly after the race and conditions improved for the main Loppet events a couple weeks later. Still, as a dress rehearsal for next year's JOs, Wirth proved that even in adverse conditions it can turn out a darned good race. As long as the snow guns run next year (and, hopefully, with a healthy dose of natural snow) hundreds of tomorrow's best skiers will ply the same trails that the country's best skied this winter.



*Mayor's Challenge  
Men's Start  
Photo: Steve Kotvis*



*Mayor's Challenge  
Women's Start  
Photo: Steve Kotvis*

Cook Classroom. The Foundation's current middle school ski program, housed at Anwatin Middle School, continued in full force as well, with record numbers of students signing up for the ski program. The Anwatin Ski Team was once again a collaborative effort with the Minneapolis Public School's Department of Community Education, whose support provided much-needed bus transportation home for several ski students on practice days.



*Pillsbury students finishing up their trail ride at Theodore Wirth Park  
Photo: Margaret Adelman*

The interest in establishing new school ski programs continues to be a strong reinforcement of the value these programs bring to their respective school communities. It also presents challenges from the coordination standpoint, requiring adequate coaching staff and equipment to cover the needs of about 500 elementary and middle school students. With the departure of some of the Foundation's veteran youth coaches, who moved on to other coaching opportunities, there were some big shoes to fill. Many skiers stepped forward, however, upon hearing of the need, and soon there were two coaches for each elementary program and three coaches for the large number of middle school skiers at Anwatin. The staffing needs were reduced in large measure due to the dedication of the Foundation's newest staff member, John Swain, who performed quadruple duty in the youth setting, coaching at Andersen, Nellie Stone Johnson, Loring, and Anwatin. This was in addition to helping with the adult ski club sessions, organizing race opportunities for the middle school skiers, and continuing to race at a high level. Suffice it to say that John knew the names of a very large number of students by the end of the season.

Establishing the needed array of skis, poles, and boots at the new schools as well as maintaining equipment stocks at previous schools can be an interesting challenge. This year, in particular, the generous support of a number of Foundation sponsors made all the difference. Through their sponsorship of the Loppet, Rossignol once again provided a large number of new skis, boots, and poles. Rossignol was also able to fill a

large gap in remaining needs after the Foundation received last-minute funding to begin the program at Nellie Stone Johnson. Even with this influx, there were more students than skis, and Finn Sisu and Gear West generously stepped forward with youth equipment from their shops. Salomon also shipped a number of skis and poles for our youth skiers, providing the desperately needed inventory to cover the large numbers of students signing up for the Minne-Loppet event (nearly 200 students). Once box after box of skis arrived from Rossignol and Salomon, it was necessary to quickly turn "bare" skis around into ones that were mounted with bindings and ready for use. In stepped Hoigaard's, agreeing without hesitation to mount bindings on a large numbers of skis in very short order.

In late November, each elementary school program kicked off, continuing for 8-9 weeks with ski sessions one day per week during physical education class. Coaches utilized a written ski and nutrition curriculum first developed in 2008, providing a framework to teach nutrition and wellness lessons as part of the overall ski lesson on a given day. To help assess the take-home messages that were remaining with students, coaches gave a pre-and post-test to gain quantitative data from the schools. In addition, two schools, Loring and Bryn Mawr, were the settings for the Foundation's first formal evaluations by an outside observer. This was carried out by Maree Hampton (also an active skier, runner, and biker), who used a variety of methods to gather qualitative student data. These methods included class evaluations, student journaling, parent surveys, and student focused forums. The impetus for this type of assessment was the feeling that our quantitative test data was only yielding a small piece of the larger picture. When both types of data were considered in a more cumulative fashion, we were able to obtain a more accurate picture of what the students understood, what was important to them, and how their perceptions about skiing and nutrition changed. In short, Ms. Hampton concluded that students loved skiing, they were more open to exercising outdoors in the winter, and they understood that there was a direct relationship between wise eating and their health.

Tested students showed general improvement in knowledge from the start to the end of the ski curriculum. Based on observational data, it seemed that students had a good general understanding of concepts but, probably due to their youth, may have had more difficulty with specifics. For example, they understood that it was important to have iron in the diet but did not always know which food was the best source of it. Likewise, they knew that a "herringbone" type of technique was helpful for getting up larger hills, but they may not have remembered the exact name of the technique on a written test. Students were also strongly influenced by lessons with striking visual information.



Some of the lessons that received the most feedback, for example, were those that showed students test tubes full of sugar or fat, which corresponded to the amount of sugar or fat found in various types of food. Students could directly see the amount of fat in a cheeseburger or deep-fried item compared to a more healthy choice. Perhaps most importantly, students expressed that they cared about their health and wanted to do things to be healthy, including cross country skiing.

At Loring, staff from the Kids Cook Classroom program introduced many of the nutrition topics to the students. They further reinforced the verbal information with practical application through two family dinner and ski evenings and through their personal catering of an end-of-season banquet at the school. Loring students experience Kids Cook Classroom lessons during the spring and fall of each school year, working directly in the school's community garden and enjoying the harvest of foods they have grown. Collaborating with Kids Cook staff for the ski program produced a valuable visible connection between exercise and healthy nutritional choices. Most importantly, students could appreciate the link between exercise and nutrition in very simple terms:

*I enjoy skiing. It takes energy to ski. Energy comes from the food that I eat and helps keep me strong. Skiing also helps keep my body strong and relies upon me to keep my "engine" filled with good, healthy fuel.*

An unanticipated extension of the Foundation's ski program was seen at both of the newest school additions this year. At Loring, physical education instructor Nancy Duwenhoegger began taking the rest of her Monday gym classes out on her own, since those students also wanted to participate. Since Foundation coaches are only able to commit to 3-4 classes per day, this was a brilliant way to maximize the use of the equipment stored on site at the school. As a result the number of students at Loring that learned to ski more than doubled what Foundation coaches could have accomplished in their classes alone.

The Nellie Stone Johnson school community took things even a step further. In addition to the three classes led by Foundation coaches, physical education instructor Julie Ellingson provided the skiing opportunity to nearly all of the elementary students passing through her class during the winter. By the end of the winter, Nellie Stone offered skiing as an in-house Friday "field trip" to students who had exhibited good behavior and were caught up on class work. Additional school staff working with after-school study groups used skiing as a break between the end of school and the study time, allowing students an opportunity for fresh air and exercise prior to exercising their brains once again.

Nellie Stone Johnson students were so enthusiastic



about their new ski experience that they worked with the Foundation to arrange a field trip to Theodore Wirth in early March so that students could ski on the wide groomed trails of the Hap Lutter Snowmaking Loop. Coaches skied with groups of 25 students at a time, giving many their first view of the bigger up-hills and down-hills that cross country skiers can encounter. It was a thrilling experience for all involved and an effort the Foundation hopes to offer more frequently in the coming ski seasons.

It should be noted that over time, all schools with which the Foundation has worked have embraced the cross country ski experience and frequently have extended their energy to others within their schools. At one school, the gym teacher loaned a set of skis to a younger student who showed particular enthusiasm and promise so the student could ski on his own. In another, a teacher from a grade not included in the Foundation classes took her entire class skiing and on a special field trip outing. The examples are many and tend to come out as an after-thought during simple conversations. Each year is different, but the ski program is clearly having a lasting and positive influence not only on the students but also on the staff at each school. Our testing data can give us a way of assessing changes in knowledge and attitude at each of these schools, but our eyes and ears and hearts tell us that every ounce of effort is worth it and that we are providing a truly wonderful experience to these students.

## **F**OUNDATION GOES FACEBOOK...

The Nordic Ski Foundation has three Facebook pages – one for the Foundation generally ([www.facebook.com/loppet](http://www.facebook.com/loppet)) one for the upcoming 2011 Junior Olympics (search for 2011 Junior Olympics) and one for the City of Lakes chapter of Trips for Kids ([www.facebook.com/tripsforkidscityoflakes](http://www.facebook.com/tripsforkidscityoflakes)). To keep up on all the latest and to impress your friends with your internet savvy, become a facebook fan of one, two or all three pages. Invite friends to become fans, post pictures or stories. Questions: call the Loppet Hotline at 612 604-5330 or send an email to [info@cityoflakesloppet.com](mailto:info@cityoflakesloppet.com).

*Nellie Stone Johnson Elementary students visit Theodore Wirth Park for a skiing field trip*  
Photo: Margaret Adelsman

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Have an idea for an article? Want to place an advertisement in this publication? Contact Ben Kremer (612 387-2002) or John Munger (612 604-5331).



*Teeter Totter at Midwest Champs - Photo: Phil Bode*

## CITY OF LAKES NORDIC SKI FOUNDATION CALENDAR

June 26, 2010 - Tri-Loppet  
September 18, 2010 - Trail Loppet  
October 12, 2010 - Annual Meeting  
October 23, 2010 - Trails Day  
February 5-6, 2011 - City of Lakes Loppet Festival Weekend  
March 6 – 12, 2011 - Junior Olympics

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