



Spring Newsletter 2020



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On the cover: Scenes from the “virtual” 2020 Sitka Salmon Shares CityTrail Loppet, as captured by the Loppet community.

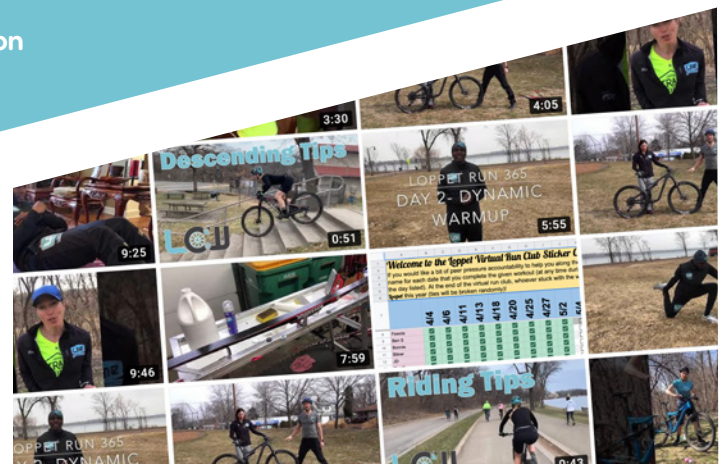
A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SPRING 2020 JOHN MUNGER

We talk a lot about the Loppet love of adventure – being willing to take paths with uncertain outcomes, and focusing on the journey instead of the destination.

But, six months ago, I don’t think any of us could have predicted how uncertain the path we’re on today would be, with the ground shifting under our very feet. In this newsletter, we’ll celebrate the highs of a fabulous winter festival, new and growing programs, and a successful winter at The Trailhead. We’ll also reflect on the World Cup that almost was, and how Loppet operations are shifting to bring our community together in spirit even if we can’t be together in person.

But most of all, I want to say how grateful I am for our community: Loppet members and friends, runners and bikers and skiers, partners and sponsors and donors, TRAIL KIDS and Minne-Loppet and Junior Loppet participants and their families, and, of course, our staff.

Strong communities that we form during the good times sustain us during times like these. But how do



we sustain each other when we can’t see each other? Or give each other high-fives or a slap on the back, or any of the other “little” things that we have always taken for granted, but that seem to mean so much now?

Well, I think there is an answer here. We sustain each other as best we can with phone calls and emails and Zoom chats. We sustain each other by thinking back on our experiences together over the years – volunteering, running and skiing and biking together, building trails, creating The Trailhead, hosting events, working so hard on the FIS World Cup, bringing Minnesota the best night of the year at the Luminary Loppet, creating opportunities for kids to find their love of skiing, biking and running, helping athletes achieve their dreams, and just sharing our love for an outdoor active lifestyle!

We sustain each other through shared experiences – even if we cannot share those experiences at the same time or in the same place. The Sitka Salmon Shares CityTrail Loppet is an example. Our team put together

a great event – coronavirus be damned! I ran the last day of the event, and while I didn't see another soul on the trails, I felt a sense of solidarity with all the others that I knew already ran or will run. We are all mourning our lost sense of connection. But when we run the same trail, look back on the same experience, or look forward to the next shared event, we feel a bit better.

I know this same experience is happening across the organization. Our Junior Loppet coaches connecting with our kids each week. Our LNR and LCW coaches are running on-line strength training. LR365 staff are supporting kids in our running programs, helping them to keep motivated and fit. And our Trails crew has been keeping the ski trails and mountain bike event trails groomed and buffed out. The method of connection varies across the organization – but the common thread is about keeping the community together.

Our Events team, our Adventures Team, our Sport Team, our Trails Team, or our communications department, – the whole organization is bent on the task of maintaining those connections. I could not be prouder of our staff and our community than I am right now!

But, on a more somber note, I would be remiss not to spend a few minutes talking about where we are at now and we are going.

The last eight weeks have obviously been challenging. The pandemic has meant closing The Trailhead, shutting down some programming, and, of course, cancelling the Fastenal Parallel 45 Festival and World Cup race. Combine that with the economic uncertainty in the world, and, similar to many other organizations, we are facing our own economic uncertainty.

Our leadership team and our board worked together on planning, with the goal of emerging from this pandemic as healthy as we can be. We created a new budget projecting a significant decrease in income. We've cut all non-essential expenses. We've put some of our financing into temporary forbearance. A generous donor stepped up with a significant grant specifically to keep as much of our staff as possible intact, albeit at reduced levels, through at least the end of June – giving us time to assess our options and, hopefully, find creative ways to generate the revenue necessary to keep the organization's staff together for the duration.

We applied for and received Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) funding, allowing us to ramp staffing back up through June 20. Beyond all the work I described above to adapt our core programs, we've been working



on several strategic capacity building projects that will serve us well through and beyond this pandemic. We have been researching options and possibilities for upgrading registration and accounting systems. We have been updating our branding and marketing materials. We have been finishing projects, like a pole barn at our North Minneapolis headquarters space.

And, we see signs of cautious optimism. We are not seeing anywhere near the revenues that we would in a "normal" world, but we are meeting and, in certain areas, exceeding our "pandemic budget" income estimates. We are more hopeful than ever that we will be able to sustain the Loppet through this downturn, and be able to emerge ready to rebuild.

But make no mistake. We are not in a great place. Even our optimistic budget is much less than our normal, non-coronavirus, budget. And we will only survive all of this with the help of our community. So please join us. Take that on-line strength class. Participate in a new alternative version of our events. Renew your membership. Volunteer in whatever weird new way we will need volunteers. And support our mission with a donation.

This adjusting and morphing and changing course is pretty much exactly what we at the Loppet do best. So if you are looking for a horse to bet on – an organization that will help keep the community together through this storm – this little unicorn called the Loppet Foundation might just be a good place to put your faith.

Thanks for the years of support. And thanks for continuing to believe in us.

John Munger
Executive Director



REFLECTIONS ON MY FIRST LOPPET WINTER: A MINNE-LOPPET ADVENTURE

RAY APONTE, ADVENTURES DIRECTOR

I wanted to take a minute and share a story with you from the Minnie-Loppet this past winter. If you recall, we had a cold spell around January 16th. It was one of those crisp, well below zero days; the kind that crunches snow – you know the sound. I was scheduled to greet the Pillsbury Elementary team at the Trailhead that morning. As I looked out my bedroom window, I noticed the frost frozen to the branches and temps on my phone came in at a brisk -9. I was thinking, "No way are they training today," but I geared-up regardless, and headed to the Trailhead. A few minutes later, a yellow bus arrived with forty 9-10-year old skiers bundled up with a look of "Lets ski!" in their eyes. They unloaded from the bus without a single weather comment and put their skis and poles on the rack. We took a seat inside so that we could do a welcome and as part of my announcements, I let them know that I doubted that they would ski today. That's when a little girl named Ava, said "You need to toughen up, coach Ray!" All I could do was smile and nod my head yes. Every kid skied that day on wide-open, empty trails. Thank you, Ava, for reminding me to never lower my expectations of what young folk can accomplish.

This story symbolizes my first winter as the Adventure Director, I had the honor of facilitating Trailhead ski visits for over 600 young skiers from northside schools. The Minne-Loppet is a 12-week long school-based program for 3rd-5th graders that teaches new skiers how to ski. You may have seen them compete at our annual Minne-Loppet race in February. We had over 400 young participants with our own Mayor Frey as the Race Official. It was a magical event with many kids expressing gratitude that they learned how to ski, formed positive relationships but more importantly, saw them-

selves as skiers and that it was OK to be outside in winter. For some of us growing up without these opportunities, this shift can be a game changer on how we view ourselves and what we can do. The ability to help shape these "aha!" moments is what we did last winter.

Some other highlights this past winter were partnering with Northside organizations such as Northside Improvement Zone, Redeemer Church, Project Success, and Hospitality House to help support bringing Northside community members to the trailhead for a day of outdoor fun. Ski lessons were taught by students attending Henry High School. You may have seen the Ski Ambassadors on trail checking for trail passes this past winter. Many learned how to ski and everyone loved the tubing hill. Our Junior Loppet program continued to provide outdoor experiences to Anwatin, Franklin and Northeast Middle Schools. The programs were a hit with over 125 students learning ski technique and team building, as well as attending three winter overnight trips to various Minnesota ski areas.

A life-long journey of mine is being realized at the Loppet Foundation. We are creating spaces for folks of color to thrive in outdoor activities by providing a welcoming exposure, high-quality equipment and talented coaches. This programming is core to the Foundation mission and this past winter, our team worked exceptionally hard to close the winter activity opportunity gap. On behalf of the Loppet, I want to thank you for your contributions that directly fund these winter programs that support our ability to facilitate a shared passion for outdoor adventures with a focus on Northside schools. Again, thank you for your support.

MEMORIES OF MID-MARCH, 2020

COMPILED BY JOHN BUSSEY, EVENTS DIRECTOR

Though the FP45 was cancelled I met and collaborated with some great people that I would not have if not for this event. I received feedback from the community saying how much they were looking forward to the event which showed how much excitement there was for this. Also seeing the Loppet folks carry the massive bell-ringing station onto the course was pretty cool.

PAUL WISNIEWSKI, FASTENAL

I will never forget the Sunday, two days before the scheduled start, when I skied the course with many of the volunteers who helped to organize the World Cup. Seeing the stadium decorated for the World Cup and having Jessie Diggins participate in ski races with local skiers, both young and old, made the whole planning effort worthwhile.

**MIKE BONO,
ORGANIZING COMMITTEE CHAIR**



In the midst of the crazy crisis going on, there were several awesome moments. But I think my favorite was getting to put on the Minnesota World Cup bib. To me, it was so much more than just a race bib. It was a physical representation of all the hard work of so many, for so long, to make that race series a possibility. Seeing all our Minnesota-based sponsors who came forward to make the races possible on the bib, seeing the volunteers and host committee all wearing bibs, was a moment I'm never going to forget!

JESSIE DIGGINS

Working with Loppet Foundation team on the sponsorship was so much fun. And the spontaneous (and physically distanced) skiing Sunday morning of the cancelled event reminded me of why we love the Nordic community. While it was hugely disappointing to have to cancel, I consider the whole affair a practice run for a much larger event in 2022!

JOHN OHMAN, MORTENSON



While the event might not have taken place as planned, our Sunday morning celebration was one to remember. There was so much joy and energy from a small but brilliant group of people gathered to celebrate our success. And how fun to open the course to friends and families! I loved seeing all the kids in the start gates!

**LINDSEY JOHNSON,
LOPPET EVENT MANAGER**

The "royalty" of Minnesota skiing lined up for a hot lap on the course! Jessie Diggins, Brian Gregg, Caitlin Gregg, Alayna Sonnesyn, Garrott Kuzzy, Doug Debold and Carolyn Bramante. This group of superstars was so impressed and proud that our community had pulled this WC effort together. It made me realize what a feat it had been to organize this and COVID-19 was not going to diminish the accomplishment.

PIOTR BEDNARSKI, LOPPET SPORT



The most amazing moment for me was the "spontaneous" get together on March 15th. It was a thrilling opportunity to see what the stadium looked like, to ski the race course and experience the event with family – my immediate family, my World Cup Committee family and the family of local Nordic skiers. I felt so much pride for the accomplishments of the community and the committee. I would do it all again in a heartbeat.

**JILL SONNESYN,
ORGANIZING COMMITTEE MEMBER**

EST.D

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LOPPET FOUNDATION

THE LOPPET FOUNDATION EMBRACES A NEW GENDER INCLUSION POLICY

BILL MCKINNEY, LOPPET BOARD OF DIRECTORS

At the Loppet Foundation, our mission is to "create a shared passion for year-round outdoor adventure in the Minneapolis area, focusing on underserved youth and families". Recently the Board Directors for the Foundation along with a group of enthusiastic staff decided that we needed to do more to ensure we were as welcoming as possible to people of all genders and gender expressions. The issue of gender inclusion is one that has challenged many organizations, and it has been a point of particular contention for many athletic organizations. While the issue of gender relative to competitive athletic events is one we did discuss, the majority of our conversation and the policy itself, was much more focused on ensuring that we minimize barriers, increase a sense of inclusion, and eliminate any risk that someone would not feel welcome to participate in any Loppet activity.

The policy that we came up with is intended to raise the awareness of staff to issues of gender inclusion and to encourage them to constantly work to ensure we create a welcoming, supportive environment for everyone. We did not try to create very specific rules, because we felt it was impossible to anticipate all of the possible circumstances where someone's gender or gender expression might be an area of concern. Not surprisingly,

we spent some time on how to manage competitions like the City of Lakes Loppet where historically we have required participants to choose "male" or "female" race categories. Clearly this is an area where organizations from the Minnesota High School League to the International Olympic Committee have struggled to come up with policies. We consulted all of these as well as other organizations like the YWCA and the Boston Athletic Association, which manages the Boston Marathon. We are still working to figure out exactly how to implement the policy in competitive races, and while we still expect to offer prizes for top male and female racers, we also will work to be more inclusive in our approach, so that no one is forced to make a choice they would rather not just to sign up for a race.

Finally, we want to acknowledge that as an organization we are still learning how to be more inclusive. We know that we won't always get it right, and so we ask for your help. We are committed to live out our mission of creating a shared passion for year-round outdoor adventure, and we want to do it in a way that makes everyone feel like they're welcomed and enthusiastically supported! If you see an opportunity for us to do better, please let us know. Together we can make the Loppet a place where everyone can be part of the fun!

FIND THE LOPPET'S GENDER INCLUSION POLICY ONLINE AT WWW.LOPPET.ORG/ABOUT/MISSION.



LOPPET SKI CLUB GOES VIRTUAL

BONNIE CARLSON-GREEN, LOPPET SKI CLUB COACH

With nearly 600 members on our Facebook page and over 150 members signed up for our most recent winter season, Loppet Ski Club is a thriving part of the Loppet community that stays active year 'round under the leadership of 20 volunteer coaches. From brand new Nordic skiers to double-digit Birkie racers, we are bound by our love for skiing and have forged strong social connections.

One of our new participants, Brandi Richards Olson, commented at the end of the season, "The encouragement and support was phenomenal. I had such a great experience [and the] coaching was stellar!" In addition to twice-weekly group lessons from December-February (featuring elite guest coaches like Caitlin Compton Gregg and Brian Gregg, Jan Guenther, and Ahvo Taipale), skiers enjoy many social events like Saturday morning potlucks, skiing under a full moon, destination skis and the popular "Glow Ski" on the Chain of Lakes. Ski clubbers also contribute significant volunteer hours to the Loppet foundation from serving as event leads, Minne-loppet coaches, staffing food stops and many other invaluable positions.

This year, Loppet Ski Club unveiled a new event called the "Virtual Birkie." Held on Birkie weekend at Mora Vasaloppet Nordic Center, this event encouraged skiers not heading to Hayward for the weekend to ski their longest ski ever, enjoy a potluck (naturally) and finish the day with a sauna and roll in the snow. Warren Klibbe, a newcomer to skiing since moving from Los Angeles this past year, skied a total of 44 kilometers. Klibbe observed that the "quality of the trails and the

number of different routes" as well as "access to the sauna and kitchen made for an enjoyable day out."

When we planned our "Virtual Birkie," however, we had no idea that the entire ski club would be going virtual in March of this year due to the COVID19 pandemic. Ski clubbers – especially our newest members – were now faced with the double-whammy of the end of ski season and no opportunities to continue the ski fitness they had acquired during the winter months. After much deliberation, coaches decided to continue to offer summer activities virtually.

Options for participants to continue their ski fitness activities virtually were rolled out on May 1st. Mondays offer ski training/technique video suggestions. Tuesdays and Thursdays are ski-specific strength training using materials found around the house. Wednesdays are a dryland workout involving intervals, threshold and skills/plyometrics. Fridays are different coaches' favorite pole hikes around the metro area that participants can do on their own any day of the week, following social distancing guidelines. Taking a tip from the Loppet Run Club, participants can enter their activities using emojis on the Ski Club Sticker Chart with opportunities to win gift cards for Mill Valley at the Trailhead or Loppet swag.

While we look forward to the opportunity to gather together again, Loppet Ski Clubbers continue to have the opportunity to improve their ski fitness and knowledge and will be ready when the snow flies again this winter.



Photo: John Iverson

MEET THE STRANDS, A TRAIL KIDS FAMILY

KIM RUDD, TRAIL KIDS DIRECTOR

John Strand has been coaching TRAIL KIDS fall and winter programs for the past three years. John and his wife Katie have a son Bjorn (10) who just completed his fourth year of TRAIL KIDS along with Segovia (6) who just finished her first year in the program. The Sherman-Strands also have a nine-year-old son, Wendell, who has a very rare genetic mutation (GNB1) that confines him to a wheelchair, among other challenges that he faces. Their youngest child and future TRAIL KIDS participant is Abraham who will turn two in July.

John says that what his son loves about TRAIL KIDS the most is being out in the woods on the trails having adventures. Bjorn also loves his coaches and teammates. Segovia enjoys the social aspect of TRAIL KIDS and was very proud of winning a medal at this past winter's Super Ski race events.

TRAIL KIDS is broken up into different teams of ten youth and two coaches. Each team has a different country as their team name such as Team Sweden, Norway, Canada, USA, etc.

When asked about his teams, John says, "When I first started coaching, I coached Team Norway, and I wrote a team cheer that my cousin helped me translate into Norwegian. The kids loved it. This year, our team name changed to Team Canada, so the cheer needed to change as well. My family members are big fans of the Grammy-winning band the Okee Dokee Brothers. On the band's last record, Winterland, they had a song

called 'Slumberjack.' I took the lyrics and rewrote them (in fine folk music tradition) into our new Team Canada Cheer, in call and response style, which the kids also love!"

**When the northern lights come out—Eh!
And the forest goes to bed—Eh!
The great Canadian skiers—Eh!
Start skiing 'bove your head—Eh!
From the pines of the big woods—Eh!
Skiing classic and skate—Eh!
Don't hate these skiers—Eh!
Just because they're great—Eh!
Eh!—Eh!
Eh!—Eh!
Ehhh!**

John has also been involved in reviving the Nordic ski program at Patrick Henry High School, and was the head Nordic ski coach there from 1999-2005. He is an IB Higher Level English Literature, 11/12 Literature teacher and Outdoor Club Adviser at Thomas Edison Senior High, which he co-founded in 2012.

In the photo above, John Strand, Katie Sherman, and their kids Bjorn, Wendell, and Segovia Sherman-Strand are joined in their front yard by Jesse (also a TRAIL KIDS coach), Brianne, Acadia, Payson, and Clay Olson who are also a TRAIL KIDS family and neighbors of the Strand family in Longfellow Neighborhood of South Minneapolis.

CELEBRATING THE SPIRIT OF THE LOPPET 2020

The Spirit of the Loppet Awards are given out each year to honor members of the Loppet community who exemplify the core Loppet values of Adventure, Excellence, Integrity, Inclusiveness, and Stewardship. In 2020, we are celebrating 10 individuals and teams who truly bring Loppet magic to life!

ADVENTURE

Michael LeBlanc is an LNR standout who debuted on the elite scene at the World Para Nordic Ski NorAm in Midway, Utah, in February, 2020, where he won three national titles. He made his international Para Nordic debut that same month at a World Cup race in Finsterau, Germany.

The World Cup Organizing Committee leadership team, **Mike Bono, Matt Hedman, Jill Sonnesyn, Raquel Counihan, Doug DeBold, Tom Ajax, Carla Pardue, Dan Ness, and Corey Brinkema**, stepped boldly into the unknown in planning the first World Cup race on U.S. snow since 2001.

STEWARDSHIP

Mary McKelvey is an LNR athlete, Run Club member, and Loppet volunteer. She is being celebrated for the equal care and attention she brings to encouraging high-level LEMONS adult skiers, coaching adult beginners, and leading her TRAIL KIDS group.

Holden Holland Magnuson, Manuel Gomez Romero, Denise Pliego Galan, and Sofia Hernandez Limas were pioneers of the new Ski Ambassador program. They welcomed people to the park, helped skiers learn more about the trails, and reminded skiers to display their trail passes.

EXCELLENCE

Julie Gujer is an avid mountain biker, skier, and general seeker of outdoor fun and adventure. She's also a talented coach and designer, who brought her high standards and skills to Loppet Cycle Works programming and design of the stylish LCW kit.

At the 2020 24 Hours of Wirth Race, **Naomi Ohman and Cynthia Osterling** each skied a total of 253 km (more than 5 Birkies), with Cynthia finishing the distance in 23:47:23 and Naomi right on her heels at 23:48:06, setting a new American women's record for distance skied in 24 hours!

INTEGRITY

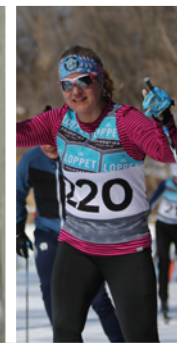
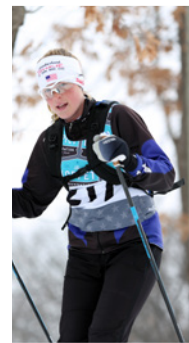
Kim Boyce volunteered to be the chief of stadium for multiple events this past winter (including the citizen portion of the World Cup), and also took on several trails projects. When he says he is going to do something, you can count on him 100% of the time to get it done and do it well!

Mary Bauer is a stalwart member of Loppet Run Club, has done about every ski thing a Loppet person can do, and is a competitive canoer as well! She's a regular medical team volunteer at Loppet events, she was recently appointed to the new Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Task Force.

INCLUSIVENESS

Kyle Hansen is the PE teacher at Bethune Community School, where he connects students to the Minne-Loppet and to biking opportunities. He is also the spearhead of "Cool Meets Cause," a program that connects girls of color from the North Minneapolis community to snowboarding.

Mark Trumper has helped get hundreds of kids outside and on skis and bikes at Pillsbury Elementary. Mark retired from his position as an English Language Learner teacher last year, but has continued working with kids at the school, both with the Minne-Loppet and with Pedal Power.



READ MORE ABOUT THIS YEAR'S HONOREES AT WWW.LOPPET.ORG!



STAYING CONNECTED WHILE RUNNING APART

MICHELLE HALL, LOPPET RUN CLUB

I joined the Loppet Ultra Trail Run Club a few years ago to familiarize myself with the area trails, augment my road marathon training, improve my balance and strength, and to connect with other adults who enjoy running as much as I do. Through it I've run farther than I had ever imagined, 43 miles in last year's Loppet Loppet, and made many friends along the way. It wasn't until this pandemic that I realized what a profound positive impact the run club has had on me.

The Loppet Ultra Trail Run Club typically starts April 1st. Due to the pandemic, it's gone virtual this year. Our fantastic volunteer coach, David Bitner, emails us workouts and training tips three times per week, created an app for us to interact, and a Google sheet as a training contest. He also has encouraged us to complete various virtual races, such as the Sitka Salmon Shares CityTrail Loppet, Great Virtual Run Across Tennessee and the Race Across the USA. By the way, he's kicking my butt across a virtual Tennessee as I'm writing this! In addition to completing these virtual races, many of us are training for fall races, such as the Loppet Loppet, in hopes that they will still happen. These things have encouraged us to interact virtually and resulted in a slew of emails, texts and calls to each other to share in our training. Recently one of our trail buddies sent a series of pictures for us to try to guess where she had been running. It was a fun diversion that made me want to find that trail on my next run. These are things that we rarely did prior to the pandemic, because we'd usually be running together every few days.

Although we no longer are training together, I am realizing how much I've learned from these run club members and our coaches. Now when doing warm-up field

drills at Wirth Beach, I reminisce about us singing Wizard of Oz songs. Ok, well not everyone would, it was just a few of us. It still makes me laugh and get through the drills! During my speed work around Brownie Lake, I picture my run club friends ahead of me, as they often are, but I now catch and pass them. Go, go, go!

My actual pace quickens. I picture us laughing as we splashed through the huge mud puddle on the far end of the lake, which is now completely dry, and marvel at what a difference a year makes. During hill repeats at Hyland Hills or Eloise Butler, I picture other training partners "Tall and Proud" as their ski coaches would instruct them. Up, up, up! I push hard all the way to the top of the hill.

On the way down, I picture Bitner's amazingly fast cadence. Tap, tap, tap! My feet actually quicken. Near the end of long runs at Hyland, Wirth, or Lebanon Hills, I picture another training partner's ever relaxed posture and effortless footwork. I try to emulate this without a clue if I come close, but know that it helps me keep going. I smile at the rare sight of another runner on the trail, only to realize afterwards that my Buff is up high and they can't see that I'm smiling. These things have kept me mentally motivated and training hard, even though I don't have my Loppet Run Club training partners around to push me.

Although we are actively avoiding running with each other, we continue to find ways to share in our experiences. I'm so thankful that I found this community through the Loppet. I'm getting stronger, appreciating our greenspaces and feeling connected when I need it the most. Hope to see you all on the trails... eventually!



TRAIL KIDS WINTER SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

KIM RUDD, TRAIL KIDS DIRECTOR

The past winter season brought all sorts of fun and adventure to the TRAIL KIDS crew! Some highlights from the season include:

- A successful Super Ski Race Series included a skate, classic, skicross, sprint and age gap relay event attended by all the Loppet TRAIL KIDS programs from North East, Franklin, Anwatin, Wirth and Hyland teams.
- Record number of one hundred forty TRAIL KIDS participants combined at Hyland and Wirth TRAIL KIDS programs.
- Around 45 TRAIL KIDS coaches/parents made a positive impact getting kids active and outdoors this winter!
- Valentine treasure hunt, relays, games and fun adventures during the twelve weeks of programming!
- Special visits from Olympian and local stars such as 2019 Birkie winner Alayna Sonnesyn along with Olympian and World Cup racers Tyler Kornfield, Becca Rorabaugh and Rosie Frankowski!
- New friends were made to grow our loppet TRAIL KIDS family!
- Skiing on natural snow ski trails for most of the season!





NORTHEAST MIDDLE SCHOOL JUNIOR LOPPET TEAM HAS A FABULOUS WINTER

ALISSA JOHNSON, NEMS JUNIOR LOPPET COACH

We had a fantastic winter at Northeast Middle School! We started the season with a ski trip up at YMCA Camp Warren in Eveleth, MN. The weekend was full of skiing, team bonding, and fun adventures.

As for skiing in Minneapolis, it was great that there was enough snow all winter that we could ski at Columbia Golf Course often. We went to the trails at Theodore Wirth a few times for the Trail Kids and Junior Loppet races.

A highlight from our winter camp trip was the last day. It was -22°F outside but we still decided to get out and ski a bit in the woods near the camp. Everyone bundled up, but by the time we were done I don't think anyone even noticed the cold. It really showed how adventurous the kids are!

Everyone on the team improved their skills and confidence on snow, and it was cool to see their progress throughout the winter! Unfortunately due to the coronavirus our spring plans changed, but we have continued to connect with each other over virtual practice meetings.

We have been encouraging the kids to get outside and stay active during this time while maintaining social distance guidelines.





LOPPET RUN 365: A NEW WAY TO TRAIN

ABDI BILE, LOPPET RUNNING DIRECTOR

Last winter, Loppet Run 365 had a great indoor season giving us all good reason to look forward to another terrific outdoor season. In the first week of March, the juniors went back to their high school track programs fired up and ready to go. I am sure their coaches were both impressed and appreciative of the progress of their athletes. Unfortunately, very soon after the juniors' return, the outbreak of COVID 19 was in full swing and things took a turn for the worse. I believe the whole world downplayed the severity of the virus initially, but it quickly became very apparent that this would be something unlike anything we have ever seen.

LR365 Elite athletes have continued to train individually. Every week I send them their training program via WhatsApp, emails, phone calls, FaceTime, and conference calls. Since we are not using the gym, tracks, and other essential resources, I have improvised quite a bit. Our new training regimen now consists of long runs, fartleks, tempo runs, intervals, hills, and conditioning. Thus far the new regimen has shown to be effective working well to combat the biggest setback of the virus: lockdown. Will cross-country be possible? Will there be a track season in 2021? These things remain uncertain making it difficult for athletes to stay motivated and for coaches to design programs with no specific goals or races in mind.

With the announcement of high school competition cancelation this year, the juniors have returned to our LR365 program. So, my focus at this point is:

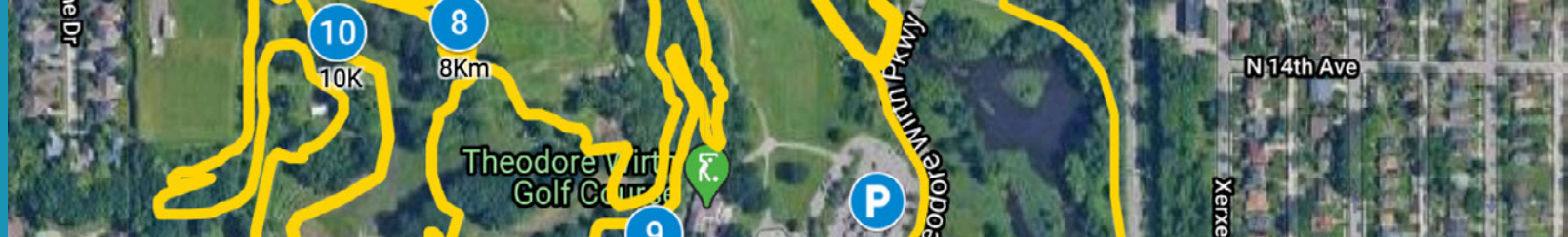
- To keep on motivating our athletes.
- To reduce the intensity since there is no specific goal in sight.

- To advocate for the implementation of cross training activities such as biking for additional benefits.
- To convey optimism and hold out hope for a cross-country season this fall and work toward that.
- Lastly, to work on the weaknesses of each athlete during this down time.

This last point is paramount as there are things coaches tend to overlook when things are busy, competitions are underway, and people are under stress. Now is the time to go in deep into whatever lingering and neglected issues exist.

My general outlook in regard to the running community after COVID-19 is one of optimism. I strongly believe the running community will grow as a lot of people will pick up the sport as a means of exercise and recreation during this lockdown. A new generation is emerging that values fitness and gym work but never really fully experienced all the outdoors has to offer in their physical pursuits. Once you have become an outdoor person, appreciating the natural beauty of landscapes as well as the sights, sounds, smells, and fresh oxygen of nature it will be hard to go back to indoor sports. People are tired of being locked down and stuck in the house and this will bring forth a newfound appreciation for outdoor recreation and exercise, namely running.

All in all, I am hopeful and predict that outdoor adventures and enthusiasm will grow. From outdoor yoga to outdoor concerts, we may return to the 1960s in a good way. Let us hope for the best. Loppet, let's get ready to accommodate the new influx of adventurers once quarantine restrictions are lifted!



SITKA SALMON SHARES CITYTRAIL LOPPET 2020: COURSE DESIGN DURING A PANDEMIC

PAUL JOHNSON, EVENTS AND OPERATIONS MANAGER

I recently attended a conference on event safety and security and one of the themes discussed was contingency planning. The breakout group I was with were mostly road race event managers and I found it interesting that, while some of their events had amazing backup plans, few had reason or need to consider course design alternatives. If I have learned anything in my last couple years on the Loppet events team, we are constantly evaluating and adjusting each and every event course based on safety, the adventure factor, difficulty, access, weather, trail conditions, and more.

But COVID-19 is new territory for all of us. Could we put together a course/event for CityTrail that kept our beloved adventurers safe and honored or exceeded the guidelines set by MPRB, MDH and the CDC? We were determined to try and that meant editing our course design and event structure playbook. Here is an inside "operations" look at (just some of) the key principles we had to adjust or emphasize for CityTrail this spring:

- Be true to our core design principles of using as much off-pavement trail as possible, making it an adventure that works for both elite and beginner runners, minimize out and back sections, etc.
- Course and event must allow runners to maintain social distancing:
 - Start interval that avoids congregations at the start/finish as well as on the trail.
 - The event needs to be more than one day. We chose six days.
 - For camaraderie and safety (e.g. kids), we would allow households to run together and sign up for the same start time.
 - We can't provide shared transportation (e.g. buses), so the start and finish need to be close enough to walk or do as a warm up or cool down.
- We can't have police or volunteers out all day for nearly a week, so no road crossings.
- Keep the trails "close to home" where we can more easily keep the course markings intact and accurate and runners are never all that far from their car. And since runners are solo, avoid any

areas where someone might feel uncomfortable by themselves or have more potential to get lost.

- CityTrail is usually a flatter course as our spring race since many runners are just getting into running shape after winter. So avoid the big hills where there are other interesting and flatter options.
- On our multi-use trails, we need to go the "correct" direction since trails are open to the public, including bikes. Communicate to the public that the trails will have more runners than usual.
- Course markings:
 - Need to be out for a week so avoiding public-heavy areas is preferable.
 - Need to check every day or more often.
 - WAY more markings than usual since no course marshals or following the runner ahead of you. This meant lots of arrows and tape. And half kilometer markers instead of mile markers to help runners stay tuned in.
- Goal is a length of 10K, but prioritize keeping it interesting and adventurous over an exact distance.
- Be sure our messaging ensures that runners understand their role.
 - Safety and social distancing only work if runners take responsibility. Participation and getting outside are prioritized over competition. Be considerate and take care of each other.
 - Runners are prepared; there are no aid stations or volunteers on course.
 - Let us know if anything on the course needs attention. Be our eyes!

Credit and thanks go to course and trail gurus David Bitner, Isaac Kasper and Robert Ibler. And the start/finish setup by Lindsey Johnson and Andrea Bidelman. These two were also our volunteer coordinators, i.e. gnome patrol. And our biggest thanks to the volunteer crew that marked the course and kept it in good shape. All of them ran or biked the course before or on the first day and at least one of them was out at 6am every day to fix fallen or missing markers. They owned it – John Daniels, Rick Paal, Chris Harvey, John Mungler, Matt Laue, Garrott Kuzzy, and Ryan Atwell.



GETTING LOST WITH THE LOPPET: AN UPDATE FROM FOUR LNR ALUMNAE

HANNAH RUDD

I consider myself to be a directionally challenged person. Although I get lost a lot, there was a particular day that still stands out. My fellow LNR teammates, Margie Freed, Ingrid Thyr, Michaela Keller-Miller, and I were at a Loppet training camp in Cable, Wisconsin and we were midway through a four-hour workout.

Right from the start, I was immediately lost due to my poor sense of direction, however, I had good faith that my teammates would guide us through. But, somewhere on these meandering, tick-filled, poison-ivy covered trails we took a wrong turn, which left us scampering through the woods without an idea of where to go. We tried to use the sun as a compass; we searched for familiar bushes and we even called out for help, but we had no luck for many hours. Although in this moment we were not stoked about the situation, it was always these kinds of workouts that helped us get tougher, stronger, and grow closer together.

Looking back at my time training with the LNR, I truly believe that it was this club that taught me how to be tough, focused and determined, even when I felt like giving up while lost in the woods. The LNR coaches taught me how to be resilient after many inevitable defeats and helped me learn from my setbacks and come back stronger.

After graduating high school, Margie, Michaela, Ingrid and I headed to ski and study at universities around the country. Margie attended the University of Vermont, Ingrid went to Williams College, and Michaela and I ventured to the University of Alaska Anchorage. As our college careers came to an end, the four of us all decided that we wanted to take skiing to the next level.

If you don't know much about elite teams in the U.S,

their purpose is to develop skiers to compete at the highest level nationally and internationally with a focus on the World Cup and the Olympics. These teams typically train together during the summer and fall and once racing season begins, athletes travel to Super Tours or World Cups.

Margie and Michaela both accepted spots on the Craftsbury Green Racing Project. Ingrid accepted a spot on the Crosscut Nordic Elite Team which is based out of Bozeman, Montana. As for me, I accepted a spot on the BSF (Bridger Ski Foundation) Elite Team which is based out of Bozeman, Montana as well.

Although the four of us are parting ways again, we will continue to see each other quite a bit at races throughout the winter. As we travel around the country and world for our ski competitions, our roots will always be in Minnesota. We are all so thankful for everything that the Loppet Foundation has given us, as well as the entire Midwest ski community. This next chapter of our lives will involve lots of skiing, running, biking, lifting, working, and most importantly, lots of getting lost in the woods. We hope you'll keep in touch with us!

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SPREADING THE MOUNTAIN BIKE LOVE: COLLABORATING WITH GIRL SCOUTS RIVER VALLEYS TO BUILD NEW TRAILS

ISAAC KASPER, TRAILS AND TRAILHEAD DIRECTOR

The Loppet Foundation's mission is to create a shared passion for outdoor adventure. When we have a chance to help other organizations in their efforts to create outdoor adventure we get excited! And, when an organization with a reputation of excellence like the Girl Scouts solicits our advice, we jump at the opportunity!

Last summer Girl Scouts River Valleys reached out to see if we would be interested in helping them with a project to develop a mountain bike program and construct trails at their camp in Elk River. We were of course humbled and excited to help them with this incredible project. It is pretty awesome to be able to share our experience and what we have learned as we have grown to become a leader in this area of outdoor recreation in the Twin Cities. It's thanks to the experience we had building the trails around The Trailhead – which you made possible! – that we have been able to do this!

The two areas of the project where we are helping are:

- **Trail Development:** We were hired as professional consultants to help design the trail, write the RFP, hire the trail builder, and monitor the construction

project. The trail design, RFP process and hiring the trail builder are complete as of this spring with only the trail construction remaining to be done. Construction is set to begin this spring. This will be the fun part!

- **Programming:** Our mountain bike coaches also have also talked about programming with the Girl Scouts instructors and program developers. They have shared experience in programming, skills coaching and even bike fleet size.

The Girl Scouts' plan is to have the trails completed this fall and programming start next summer. Soon there will be another great group of young ladies learning how to maintain and ride their bikes offroad! You can bet that some of them will be passing us on the trails or helping coach our kids in the future!

If there's a Girl Scout in your life, make sure they keep an eye on this project. You can learn more on the Girl Scouts River Valleys website, at <https://www.girlscouts-rv.org/en/about-girl-scouts/news/2020/mountain-bike.html>!



A SEASON OF CHANGE AT THE TRAILHEAD

BEN BAUCH, TRAILHEAD MANAGER

Over recent months, as the world has quickly and unexpectedly transformed, a more familiar and cherished evolution has gripped The Trailhead and its pocket in Theodore Wirth Park, the movement from winter into spring. Persistent snow conditions and favorable winter temps that marked a memorable snowy season have given way to liquid lakes and leaves in the trees. Though the backdrop for this seasonal change has been a global pandemic, forcing The Trailhead's doors closed to the public indefinitely, we are encouraged by the enduring suggestion from officials and visible passion from individuals that recreating outdoors is as important as ever.

We have been thrilled to witness the park still regarded in high demand with the arrival of golf and cycling seasons. Even with The Trailhead in hibernation, the spirit

of outdoor camaraderie that it was built to house continues to live and breathe on our trails and grounds surrounding it. And with our personal space bubbles now bigger than ever, we urge you to think adventurously (while acting safely) to explore parts of Theo Wirth that are less trodden and less familiar to you. Our website, at www.loppet.org/do is a terrific launching point to find new activities and territory in the park.

We are eager for the return to The Trailhead space as we know it best: hosting multifaceted festivals and events, hearing other folks' tales from the trails, and public drinking fountains. But this spring has truly been a season of change unlike any other. So as we navigate the seasons towards a new normal, we trust in your aid to help us cultivate a space that remains safe, approachable, and dynamic with our changing world.



LOPPET CYCLE WORKS KEEPS THINGS ROLLING

BRUCE MARTENS, LCW HEAD COACH

There is no "off-season" for Loppet Cycle Works. Though the conventional cycling season for fair weather riding typically wraps up here in Minnesota in November, that's when the LCW annual training regimen begins! Programming runs year round and as we rolled into our second year energy and momentum was high.

Session I began November 1st with strength training, mobility and range of motion activities, and goals planning. Members train in the gym, on our fleet of smart trainers, and outside on singletrack focusing on building their base fitness, assessing movement patterns and form, and work to refine diet, recovery, and periodization schedules. Perhaps most importantly, LCW teammates continue to build relationships with each other, the broader Loppet community, and support winter programs through service and volunteer efforts.

February marked the shift from Session I to Session II and the ramp up to competition season. Though not all LCW members are performance oriented, many take this 12 week period to transition from base and build to race and recover. Those not hitting the competition circuit continue to grow in their competence both on and off the bike and provide essential support for Loppet programs and events.

With nearly every event on the spring and summer calendar postponed or outright canceled, Loppet Cycle Works has pivoted from race-readiness and adventure travel to team-building and creative activities to keep the energy and momentum high safely and responsibly. Session III begins June 1st and the goals for the summer are to continue to evolve skills and ability, endurance and strength, and team-building and service to our community. We are grateful for a sport that inherently provides for social distancing, individual and small group activities, and resources that continue to challenge and inspire even in the absence of conventional events and competition.

We're excited for our sophomore summer as a program under the Loppet Foundation's Loppet Sport program umbrella. As it stands Loppet Cycle Works offers 38 opportunities a week for members to participate in coached, structured activities. From social group rides to simulated performance events in remote areas around the country LCW offers a wide variety of activities for the entire family. Check out our events online, follow our adventures on social media, and join us as we roll through the summer in two wheeled style by registering as a member today!

LOPPET OPERATIONS IN A PANDEMIC WORLD

ALI PARSONS TOWLE, CHIEF PROGRAM OFFICER

It goes without saying that the world has changed dramatically since March, right? At the Loppet, we went from making final preparations for a World Cup to canceling the event, working from home and closing The Trailhead – all in a matter of days. It's been dizzying, to say the least.

We know that living in the shadow of a global pandemic is challenging and disrupting life in many different ways. Life at the Loppet Foundation is no exception. Our events, programs and offerings have historically been based on convening people in group settings, and our ability to do this is severely limited for the foreseeable future.

At the same time, there is growing public awareness that outdoor activity has perhaps never been more critical to wellbeing, as one of the healthiest and most viable outlets for managing stress during this crisis. This awareness has also cast more light on socioeconomic disparities in access to outdoor activity – an issue our mission is intended to address. And so, we're committed to finding creative ways to continue our services.

As you may know, "Loppet" means long journey over uneven terrain. This COVID-19 crisis – filled with rapidly changing information, bumps in the road, and uncertainty – feels like such a journey. We plan to navigate it using some of our greatest strengths: creativity, flexibility, a sense of adventure, and a commitment to the health and wellbeing of our community. Our goal is to be a resource for safe and fun ways to connect with others through outdoor adventure during this time. We're committed to making decisions based on the guidance of local, state and national health experts, promoting adventure and connection while also prioritizing safety.

We hope you'll join us on this journey, because we know that the best way to move through this challenge is to do it together. Even if we need to stay six feet apart. And, we hope you'll share your thoughts and concerns with us as we learn a new way to operate.



Here are a few of the practical steps we're taking:

- We're closely watching guidance from a carefully selected group of national, state and local experts. We are also working with health experts in our universe to help apply this information to our specific plans.
- We're paying close attention to information from governing bodies for sports we promote.
- The Loppet offers a variety of different programs (events, TRAIL KIDS, Ski Club, Minne-Loppet, Loppet Sport, etc.) for a range of demographics. All departments are using the same basic guiding philosophy, but we recognize that each program and event may need to make different operational choices.
- Whenever possible, we're adapting or postponing programs and events rather than cancelling them. This shows up as a "virtual" CityTrail Loppet, as video-based strength programming, etc. We're making decisions about programs on a rolling basis rather than blanket decisions for the whole summer at once.
- We're maintaining our long-time "no refund" policy for event registrations because the bulk of expenses related to events (staff time, permits, etc.) are incurred well in advance, and it's only the shared assumption of risk that is letting us keep moving forward with future plans.
- For other programming, we're considering refund policies on a case-by-case basis, so that people feel like they can make plans, but also so we're respecting peoples' health concerns and personal health decisions.
- All staff who can work remotely are continuing to do so.
- As of print time, the Trailhead is closed, and re-opening and return to operations will follow the Governor's orders.
- The Trailhead team is working with other groups that had events scheduled at The Trailhead on an individual basis to move, postpone, or cancel event reservations.
- The Chalet office remains closed, except for essential business needs – which pretty much means activity is limited to picking up the mail and printing and mailing checks to pay our bills.
- We've instituted policies for work at Adventures Headquarters that meet Minnesota requirements for careful re-opening, including limits on the number of people in the building and a rigorous cleaning schedule.