



## **Loppet Members, Community and Friends:**

Last week, John Munger notified our Board of Directors of his intent to resign as Executive Director of the Loppet Foundation. John is one of our organization's founders and our signature achievements are difficult to imagine without his vision, relentless effort, considerable skills and dedication to our organization and its mission. In the coming days, the Board will commence a search process to recruit a permanent replacement for John.

Effective immediately, Ray Aponte has been appointed to serve as Interim Executive Director of the Loppet Foundation. Ray is an inspiring leader and a passionate advocate for underserved youth and people of color. Ray has twenty-nine years of executive experience, having been a long-time principal in the Minneapolis Public Schools. Ray has led our Adventures program since joining our team last summer. Many of you have probably shared my experience of being uplifted and inspired in recent days by the sights and sounds of Ray's Adventure Campers discovering the joys to be found in exploring Theodore Wirth Park. I look forward to working with Ray.

On behalf of the whole Board, please join me in thanking John for his dedicated service to the Loppet Foundation and offering Ray your support as he leads us through the next chapter.

Jonathan Van Horn  
Board President, The Loppet Foundation

## **Message from John Munger:**

The word Loppet means journey over uneven ground. It has been quite a journey, but after eighteen years and many highs and lows, it is time for me to move on. I am stepping down as Executive Director.

We have done great things together. We built the Loppet Festival. We created the Luminary Loppet and turned it into a hallmark of a Minnesota winter. We taught thousands of North Minneapolis youth how to ski and appreciate the outdoors. We built leadership skills in hundreds of kids and young adults through our Adventure Camps and Junior Loppet programs. We built an amazing youth development and outdoor adventure program in Trail Kids. We brought Junior Nationals, the Paralympics World Cup, and the Masters World Cup to Wirth Park and brought joy to thousands of people in the process. We created an amazing network of urban mountain bike and ski trails, with snowmaking and lights, an unparalleled stadium area, and a mountain bike skills park. With Loppet Nordic Racing and Loppet Cycle Works we built great junior and adult programs in skiing and mountain biking and won multiple national championships. We brought the Somali community into the fold with Abdi Bile and Loppet Run 365. We built community through Loppet Ski Club and Run Club. We built a real and enduring relationship with the Park Board. We built The Trailhead and, I think, figured out how to run it successfully while creating community every day. We built year-round adventure-based events like the Trail Loppet, Tri-Loppet, and CityTrail Loppet, and connected with sponsors like Surly Brewing, UCare, Medica, North Memorial, and Allina Health. We built relationships with grant funders so that we can provide youth programming in a sustainable way over time, allowing us to have an even bigger impact. We partnered with organizations like US Ski & Snowboard, Share Winter and the International Ski Federation and brought in sponsors like Fastenal, US Bank, and Mortenson. And we almost ran the first World Cup in the US since 2001.

But what I'm most proud of is the community we built. People from across the region identify themselves as part of the Loppet. Skiers. Bikers. Runners. Volunteers. And people who just care about our city and want a place to plug in in a positive way.

This has been difficult work. The Board, staff, and the community have all pitched in as we forged relationships with the Park Board, schools, and civic organizations, and created essentially a new business model for getting things done and doing good in the world.

Bottom line, this has been great, meaningful work. But these next few years will probably not be about growth so much as solid management. As my staff would point out, this is not necessarily my strength. And this is a time in the world for new leaders to emerge, with new strategies and new priorities. I think the Loppet has a good base to build on, but the next phase of building belongs to someone else.

I do have one final favor to ask of all of you.

This next year will be tough for the organization. Our new leader will need time to get her/his bearings. Please stick with the Foundation. Keep volunteering. Keep advocating. Keep coming forward with new ideas and solutions. And, if you are able, keep contributing. I know we will be.

Here's to the next generation of Loppet-ness. Thank you again for the journey. We have covered some uneven ground, but I think we climbed to some pretty high peaks along the way.

As always, see you on the trails!

Your friend,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Munger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J" and "M".

John Munger