

BirchScroll®

Volume 41, Summer 2016

- 
- **Brookiebeiner**
A Fish Tale
 - **Finding Your Local**
 - **Unleash Your Inner Warrior**
 - **I Never Really Race Alone**

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summer on the trails
and wherever your
Birkie Lifestyle takes you!

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Birch Scroll[®]

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#BirkieFever

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Embracing a Year-Round Lifestyle...

While some may think of the Birkie as a one day event, it has evolved into so much more – a year-round lifestyle that inspires, enables, and empowers people to live active, outdoor lifestyles. It is our goal at the Birkie to put on great events AND to be a leader in providing inspiration and access to young and old, of all abilities, and all backgrounds. So, in keeping with that theme, we hope you enjoy this summer 2016 edition of the Birch Scroll and that it provides you with inspiration, keeps you up to date on ABSF news, and what's new in the pipeline!



While our cool, wet weather has been slowing progress, the summer Birkie Trail projects are making headway. Before the snow flies again, we will have completed the build-out of the new Birkie start area which includes finishing a bus/skier drop-off lot, a year-round trailhead building, water availability, a sound system, fencing, a large stadium, and a 7,200 square foot Birkie “Great Hall” that will be used for storage and keeping people warm on race day! We’ll celebrate the Grand Opening as part of our Annual Meeting weekend on August 6. I sure hope you can join us (see page 15 for details)!

Other critical summer projects include beginning the installation of a series of new “way-finding” signs that will make navigating and using the Birkie Trail system easier all year-round and building out a new, improved stadium/event area at ‘OO’ for the Korte (and the 10+ other events that will use that venue!).

“...a year-round lifestyle that inspires, enables, and empowers...”

This summer also marks the launch of the second half of our *Honoring the Legacy, Ensuring the Future Capital Campaign*. A successful campaign will enable us to accomplish critical trail rehabilitation and sustainability; aid station improvements for medical service on race day (includes year-round access to water and a trailhead building at every aid station); a new way-finding system; equipment to keep up with growing use and trail demands; and completion of a Nordic Center at the new ‘OO’ Korte start area where thousands ski, bike, trek, and run from all year-round. The ‘OO’ trailhead is the number one access point to the trail and having improved facilities for daily users, visiting groups, events, youth development programs and more, will benefit us all. To make this vision a reality, it will take an entire community – I hope you will consider participating (more on page 14).

We have a busy summer of events – the Lumberjack Run/Walk as part of Hayward’s own Lumberjack World Championships, our Annual Meeting & Fun Day (including the official opening of the Tony Wise Museum of the American Birkebeiner, and the dedication of the new trailhead & Birkie start in Cable), and last but not least, the Birkie Trail Run & Trek on October 1 – we hope to see you in the north woods soon!

Train on!

Ben Popp

Executive Director

American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation

The Mission of the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation

- To promote and conduct the finest international cross-country ski competition and active lifestyle events;
- To serve as good stewards of the American Birkebeiner Trail;
- To support healthy and active lifestyles among people of all ages and abilities.

AMERICAN BIRKEBEINER SKI FOUNDATION

2016-2017

Calendar of Events

2016

- July 30 Lumberjack Run/Walk Around Lake Hayward
August 6 American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation Annual Meeting & Fun Day!
September 6 2017 Birkie Week Ski Events Registration Opens
· Barnebirkie · Junior Birkie
· Nikkerbeiner · Barkie Birkie Skijor
· Birkie Sprints · Giant Ski Race
· Birkie Adaptive Ski
September 30 Birkie Trail Run & Trek Expo Opens
October 1 Birkie Trail Run & Trek, Presented by Salomon

2017

- January 1 2017 Birkie Trail Run & Trek Registration Opens
January 15 Birkie Tour
February 23-26 44th Slumberland American Birkebeiner and Birkie Week Events
March 11 45North Fat Bike Birkie
May 1 2018 Slumberland American Birkebeiner Ski Marathon Registration Opens
2018 Kortelopet, Prince Haakon, Birkie Tour, Fat Bike Birkie Registration Opens
May 15 Lumberjack Run/Walk Registration Opens
July 22 Lumberjack Run/Walk Around Lake Hayward
August 5 American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation Annual Meeting & Fun Day!
September 30 Birkie Trail Run & Trek

Join us for a year-round schedule of fun, healthy, active lifestyle events!

Dates Subject to Change

WITH SPECIAL THANKS to our amazing and dedicated sponsors for investing in the Birkie lifestyle and helping to support the many Birkie year-round, world-class events! We are grateful.

Birkie Week Events and Birkie Trail Run & Trek
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A Trail for All Seasons

Close your eyes. Take a deep breath. Smell the earthy fragrance of leaves, water, trees, and soil. Listen to the leaves rustle and the birds sing. There is something about a moment in the wild that can make the harried stresses of your week simply fall away. Each and every time you visit the north woods, you can experience the escape that the freshness of nature provides. Northwest Wisconsin offers a landscape of beautiful forests, lakes, rivers, and streams just waiting to be explored. And, if you're seeking a way to escape for a day in the woods, look no further than the Birkie Trail.

We realize that many of our readers may have only experienced the Birkie Trail when covered in a blanket of white. With that in mind, we wanted to share with you that the Birkie Trail is truly a trail for all seasons. With 107 kilometers of sun-dappled, winding trails, the Birkie Trail system is envied worldwide as a mecca for silent sports enthusiasts. It plays host to hikers, mountain and fat bikers, Nordic trekkers, runners, walkers, and skiers throughout the year, as well as the world-class events that you've grown to love - the Birkie, the Korte, the Prince Haakon, the Birkie Trail Run & Trek, and the Fat Bike Birkie. Weaving its way through Wisconsin's pristine forests, the Birkie Trail spans both Sawyer and Bayfield counties in northwest Wisconsin. Maintained and groomed exclusively by the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation (ABSF), the Birkie Trail is available for use by outdoor enthusiasts nearly 365 days a year.

Born with the advent of the first American Birkebeiner ski race in 1973, the trail has expanded far beyond just ski trails and into a network, of over 66 miles of adventure just waiting to happen. Each year over 100,000 visitors enjoy the extensive trail system and the opportunities it affords. With numerous access points, the Birkie Trail has eight trailheads conveniently located throughout the trail system and easily findable with a Birkie Trail map, including: North End Cabin; Timber Trail; Birkie Ridge; Boedecker; High-



“ We need the tonic of wildness. We can never have enough of nature.”

—Henry David Thoreau

way OO; Mosquito Brook; Fish Hatchery Park, and the brand new American Birkebeiner Start-line trailhead which will host the 2017 race.

Many folks don't realize that the ABSF acts as steward of the iconic Birkie Trail, providing year-round grooming, mowing and maintenance to all 107 kilometers. A nonprofit organization, the ABSF is fiscally responsible for maintaining 100 percent of the Birkie Trail system with annual maintenance costs of over \$350,000 anticipated in the coming year

alone. The ABSF is funded through race fees, membership dues, sponsorships, and donations; it receives no local, state, or federal tax money. Maintaining the Birkie Trail is a labor of love as the ABSF is committed to serving as good stewards of the trail, promoting the finest events, and doing everything that we can to encourage and inspire a love of activities in the great outdoors.

Summer, fall, winter or spring, no visit to Sawyer and Bayfield counties is complete without time spent on the Birkie Trail. If you're looking for somewhere to train or simply escape for a day with Mother Nature, acquaint yourself with the seasonless rolling hills and gorgeous scenery of the Birkie Trail system. The way we see it, you can never have enough nature.

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Brookiebeiner

One Tree, Four Bibs, and a Fish Tale

– Gary Gerst

After having skied 37 American Birkebeiners each, my good friend Jon Peterson and I were delighted and tickled pink to ski the "mother race" - the Norwegian Birkebeiner – earlier this year. We had a marvelous experience in Norway and as spring drew nearer we just couldn't shake our Birkie Fever.

Jon has a cabin just outside of Hayward and needed a little help felling a dead tree on the property. I'm always looking for reasons to get to Birkie country so I told him I'd come up to help.

While sipping a River Pig beer the night before our lumberjack duty, we decided we'd wake up early and try to trout fish as many brooks, creeks, and rivers along the Birkie Trail as we could. As long as our event was along the Birkie Trail, Jon suggested we call it the Brookiebeiner. Thus was born our new "Birkie" event.

Bright and early, we started our day at Fish Hatchery and immediately ran into a Birkie biathlon athlete preparing for his running intervals. He was a bit taken aback seeing two old guys sporting chest waders wearing Birkie bibs, but was kind enough to snap a few pictures and wish us luck. We, on the other hand, marveled at his single digit body fat and eager attitude. Off we went. We caught a few brookies and moved on. Next stop Mosquito Brook. I've skied over the bridge south of the Birchlegger's cabin 100's of times and always wondered if there are trout in there. Well, I'm sure there are but, my-oh-my, those alders are thick – no such luck. So on to the Namekagon. There was some open flowing water and just enough space to cast. Just like skiing, balance is huge when moving in the strong current. A couple trout responded to our offerings, but they are all still in the river either released or too smart to get into the net. We realized our water goal was too much to tackle in a day and remembered there was a tree to deal with. Besides, why shouldn't the Brookiebeiner be shared with others? Yup, you guessed it, we decided to make it a two-day event. We dropped the tree late afternoon and called two fellow Birchleggers to join us in the morning. Marcus Magnuson and Bob Naslund rounded out our Brookiebeiner team.



Brookiebeiner Founders – Jon Peterson & Gary Gerst

The next morning we hit the "Nam" further north, as well as Big Brook, and 5 Mile Creek (another alder and mosquito battle). We turned a few heads in our waders and Birkie bibs, but we had a ball and spent some quality time in one of our favorite places to be.

Brookiebeiner 2, the sequel, is already being discussed for 2017. Peterson says I get to start in the elite wave next year since I caught the most fish. I'm not really sure what that means. As far as that goes, it's fine by me, I'll take any wave as long as it's in Birkie country.



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Unleash Your Inner Warrior!

One day. Eight events. And, now a USATF Championship Race!

October 1st marks the 15th running of the Birkie Trail Run & Trek (BTRT) on the legendary hills of the Birkie Trail. From the challenge and intensity of a 100K ultra marathon to the fun of a 5K run/walk, an estimated 1000+ runners and trekkers will take to the trails for a day of fun, camaraderie, and adventure.

And, this year, the Birkie Trail Run marathon race is designated as the 2016 USA Track and Field (USATF) championship for the state of Wisconsin! USATF is the national governing body for track and field, long-distance running, and race walking in the United States. Much like the special relationship between the Birkie and the United States Ski & Snowboard Association (USSA) - which heightens the premier nature of the American Birkebeiner, the promotion of Nordic sports, and the ability to support athletes pursuing Olympic dreams - the USATF relationship will help to elevate the Birkie Trail Run & Trek. From increased participation amongst an expansive pool of athletes, to building awareness of the event nationwide, and supporting the sport of running in many ways, shapes and forms, we expect the 15th running of the BTRT to be better than ever!

Since the ABSF's first ski race in 1973,



Tammi Braund, 2015 BTRT Marathon Champion



Photo courtesy of Hansi Johnson

the Birkie has drawn a field of national and international elite athletes, as well as passionate citizen skiers. The BTRT is much the same with 2015 male marathon champion, Marco Sturm, hailing from Germany. Mass skiing and running events like the Birkie and the BTRT present a unique opportunity for average folks to line-up and race head-to-head and elbow-to-elbow with the best in the world. The USATF designation will be a draw for elite athletes regionally, nationally, and internationally, which makes the 2016 an event worthy of every runner and trekker's bucket list.

The BTRT events start and finish at Birkie Ridge Trailhead and place runners and trekkers on some of the most scenic stretches of the famous Birkie Trail and single-track sections of the CAMBA (Chequamegon Area Mountain Bike Association) trail system. With eight events on the roster - including a marathon, marathon relay (3 or 6 person teams), half marathon, Nordic Trek, 5K run/walk, youth 5K (12 and under) and 1K (free for ages 9 and under), and the 100K Ultra Marathon - there is a north woods trail experience just waiting to happen for every level of ability.

The BTRT post-race experience embodies a chill north woods vibe with picnic-style fixin's, craft beer, live music, onsite camping, spectacular autumn leaves, and camaraderie to spare. If you haven't registered,

it isn't too late. Visit www.Birkie.com/run to learn more. We hope to see you in the north woods soon!

More About the USATF

- USATF is a volunteer-driven organization that is comprised of 57 associations nationwide.
- USATF associations offer programming and host championship events in many different athletic disciplines nationwide.
- USATF trail running championship events are organized by the Mountain, Ultra & Trail Committee (MUT). The MUT Committee oversees 14 National Championships which are a mix of ultra-distance road and trail races



Volunteer [vol-uh n-teer] *noun*

1. One who voluntarily offers himself or herself for a service or undertaking
2. One who performs a service willingly and freely
3. The life-blood of ABSF events and the underlying reason the Birkie can do what we do

Perhaps you've heard it before...the Birkie couldn't possibly host world-class, year-round events without the continued support of our top-notch corps of dedicated volunteers. Truer words have perhaps never been spoken.

Just to put into perspective how incredibly invaluable our volunteers are...each February over 2000 kind-hearted souls volunteer an average of 6 hours each. And, an amazing group of 45 Race Chiefs volunteer between 12 to 40 hours each. That's over 13,000 vol-

unteer hours for Birkie race week alone!

In a word...impossible. It would be impossible to welcome the world without our volunteers' generosity of time and spirit. From registration, assigning bibs, and serving bananas at aid stations, to traffic control, baggage sorting, and awarding finish line medals, it takes thousands of hands to carry the many behind-the-scenes tasks at Birkie events. The saying "It takes a village" rings especially true for us, although in our case it is more like a few villages, two counties, several townships, and three towns to make it happen.

Our volunteers range in age from young students to young-at-heart senior citizens, and everyone in between. If you've ever had a hankering to experience a different side of Birkie Fever, we encourage you to volunteer! If you're racing on Friday, maybe you'd like to try volunteering on Saturday or vice-versa. We welcome you to join in the fun - check out www.Birkie.com/volunteer to see avail-

able opportunities!

We also know how important it is to give back to the community. With that in mind, the ABSF offers a fund-raising compensation program for non-profit organizations whose members volunteer their time at any of our events. When a group of five or more volunteers work a minimum of four hours each, their organization may be eligible to earn up to \$5 an hour per volunteer. Feel free to reach out to the Birkie Office to learn more - call 715-634-5025, ext. #2 or email birkie@birkie.com.

Finally, to our amazing, invaluable posse of volunteers we extend a heartfelt thank you for your time, your energy, and your limitless Birkie Fever, time and time again.





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A Tale of Two Cities (Or, in our case, a few villages, townships, and towns!)

An Adventure More Intriguing than Summer's Hottest Read!

While kicking back to read the latest summer thriller and relaxing on a white sandy beach may be on your weekend wish list, the Birkie team is busy dreaming of details, checklists, and white snowy trails stretching from Cable to Hayward, WI! We're hard at work crafting the tale of 2017's Birkie week of Nordic festivities - destined to be more intriguing than the hottest best-seller! So put down your summer read and immerse yourself in a story of determination, adventure, perseverance, and let's not forget good old-fashioned fun!

Prologue to Winter Fun!

Thursday, February 23, 2017

Birkie family events return to Thursday and will begin at the Hayward City Beach and finish on Main Street, with the exception of the Barkie Birkie Skijor and Giant Ski events which will start and finish on Hayward's Main Street. New in 2017, Birkie Elite athletes and Junior skiers will take part in the Birkie Sprints competition.

9:00am - Birkie Adaptive Events 1.2K or 3K

10:00 am - Barkie Birkie Skijor

12:00pm - Barnebirkie Youth Ski Tour

2:00pm - Junior Birkie Youth Ski Race

4:30pm - Birkie Sprints (New in 2017!)

5:30pm - Giant Ski Race

Friday, February 24, 2017

• **10:45am - Kortelopt 29K Classic & Skate Ski Race**

* North America's second largest ski race moves from Saturday to Friday where skiers will journey from the new Korte start area at the Highway "OO" Trailhead to the finish line and cheering crowds on Hayward's Main Street.

* **New in 2017!** The Korte will feature new "Elite" waves; skiers between 13-20 years old will start first in the new Under20 wave.

* Skiers will have a short walk (300 m/1200') from the bus to the start area where they'll find a Korte warm-up track and large warming tent to help participants prepare for the race.

• **1:15pm - Prince Haakon 15K Classic & Skate Ski Race**

* A race which honors the Norwegian King, rescued and skied to safety by Birkebeiner warriors, the Prince Haakon race will begin near Mosquito Brook and finish on Hayward's cowbell-filled Main Street.

* With an open start window, skiers have the option of arriving early to start their race with the sound of the gun, or at their leisure between 1:15 and 1:30pm.

* Prince Haakon skiers will merge with Korte skiers 1.2K (3/4 mile) into the race where the trail is wide and flat allowing for an easy blending of the races.

Saturday, February 25, 2017

• **8:30am - 44th Annual Slumberland American Birkebeiner**

* The 2017 Birke will start at 8:30am with the Elite Women's Skate wave.

* Skiers will christen the new American Birkebeiner start as they embark on a journey to their final destination at the finish line in Hayward, WI.

* The new American Birkebeiner Trailhead start area is located one quarter mile to the southwest of the Cable Union Airport. **Bonus!** This venue features a shorter walk from the bus drop-off (300 m/1000 feet), an improved warm-up track, access to the warm

and beautiful Great Hall, and a large tent to stay warm before the race's start!

Sunday, February 26, 2017

* On-Snow Ski & Bike Demo event

Schedule subject to change. Additional events will be added as details are finalized.

The Plot Thickens!

A Change of Course

The Birkie - In 2017, the move to the new American Birkebeiner Trailhead effectively shortens the race course for all skiers - back to 50K (31 miles) for the Skate race and 55K (34 miles) for the Classic. Skate skiers will note that the mini-powerline, McNaught Road crossing, and the first powerline climb have all been eliminated. Classic skiers will notice only slight changes with the elimination of the first race kilometer and the McNaught Road crossing.

The Korte - The race course traverses 29K (18 miles) through the southern half of the Birkie Trail. Classic and skate skiers will share a significantly wider trail - a full 9 m/30 ft. wide - with two classic tracks and two skate lanes. Although the race is slightly longer than in the past, skiers will experience less total climb than in previous years.

Catching a New Wave

Previously, seeding times were determined by attempting to create balanced waves that included both Birkie and Korte skiers - always a difficult task. With the separation of the Birkie and Korte races, the 2017 waves will be much more balanced. This marked change, in addition to changing the overall number of waves in each race (four for Birkie Skate, six for Birkie Classic, four for Korte Skate & Classic), may alter the wave number that each skier is assigned. All waves will have fewer skiers than in past years which will cause a realignment of wave numbers. All wave seeding is based on relative finish place in previous Birkie, Korte, or identified qualifier races. There is no such thing as a wave "demotion," only a wave reassignment. 2017 waves are not an apples-to-apples comparison to those in previous years' races.

Epilogue

The Birkie staff is committed to making your Birkie experience the best it can possibly be and we couldn't be more excited for what's in store in 2017!

Plan to make lasting memories by participating in any one or more of the 2017 Birkie week events. Gather a team and participate in the Giant Ski; experience a different kind of Birkie by volunteering for one of our many events; head downtown and cheer on finishers of all ages; we're certain you'll catch Birkie Fever around every corner. We look forward to welcoming you to the Cable and Hayward areas to participate or spectate in the Birkie week of Nordic festivities. If you haven't yet registered, we encourage you to do so!

SPOILER ALERT! While the 2017 Birkie story has yet to be written, it is going to be fantastic!

Gettin' Fatter in 2017

Participant Cap Increased by 200 Riders in 2017!

On Saturday, March 11, 2017, riders from around the globe will get ready to roll for the 5th riding of the Fat Bike Birkie - the world's largest fat bike race.

A festival atmosphere will welcome riders and spectators as fat bike enthusiasts gather at the new American Birkebeiner Trailhead for the start and finish of this year's 45NRTH Fat Bike Birkie, presented by Freewheel Bike. The new location offers convenient, on-site parking and use of the new Great Hall for the two-day expo and post-race party.

The festivities will begin on Friday, March 10 and extend through Sunday, March 12, with three days of fun, food, craft beer, demos, and riding. Both Fat Bike Birkie race courses are located on precisely groomed sections of the Birkie Trail. The Big Fat is 46K (28.6 miles) long, traversing the Birkie Skate Trail south to Highway OO and returning north on the Birkie Classic Trail. The Chico is 23K (14.3 miles) long, heading south on the Birkie Skate Trail to the High Point, and returning north on the Birkie Classic Trail to the Kortelopet Trail, and on to the finish line. The Criterium and demo course snakes around the American Birkebeiner Trailhead and will be open for use all weekend long. Whether a rider is just getting into the fat bike game or has been around the block a time or two, there is an adventure for every level of ability.

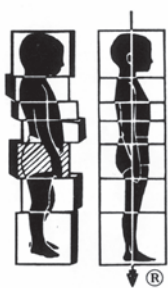


For anyone interested in seeing what the fat bike fuss is all about, there will be on-snow demo rides all weekend long. With Friday's extended expo hours, riders can pick up their race packets, pre-ride the courses, check out new gear, and ride the race Criterium!

What started with fewer than 200 riders has grown exponentially in five short years. The participant cap has once again been raised by 200 and in 2017 will allow for a total of 1200 participants. The race fills quickly; so if you're interested in riding you're encouraged to register soon at www.Birkie.com/Bike. See you in March!

“Fantastic fat bike experience today! The course was in absolutely perfect condition and the volunteers and staff were all so incredibly helpful and nice. Can't wait to come back! The last time I had that much fun on a bike I was about 8 years old.”

- Ross, Duluth, MN



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I Never Really Race Alone – It Takes a Village

– Jessie Diggins, Birkie Ambassador

I've never been so motivated to race my heart out as I was at the Olympics; knowing that the community who taught me to ski was watching and cheering for me. "It takes a village" may be an old saying, but it couldn't be closer to the truth. To put it simply, I couldn't have made it this far without the support network that makes skiing in the Midwest such a strong community. I'm fiercely proud of my roots, and for good reason.

When I won my first individual World Cup race last season, there were thousands of people behind the scenes who made everything leading up to the race possible. Nobody ever accomplishes anything all by themselves. Right up until the gun went off at the start, I was never alone. And if you'd been on the side of the course to hear our coaches screaming and hopping up and down in excitement you'd know that I never really race alone. Never! I was given the opportunity to win a World Cup because I grew up in a skiing culture filled with people who love to ski and worked hard to grow the sport.

I was fortunate enough to have a family who loves being outdoors. Before I could walk I was in my Dad's backpack, cruising



down the local ski trails. We joined a branch of the Minnesota Youth Ski League when I was old enough to get into my own 3-pin-binding skis. I learned how to put on a race bib at citizen races all throughout Minnesota. Through these experiences I grew to associate crossing the finish line with a huge sense of accomplishment, that "wow, I just did something really hard and it felt GREAT!" feeling that I will have with me my entire life.

I joined the Stillwater High School ski team and while I grew to love ski racing and the competitive side of the sport, I initially joined because of the people, community, and spirit of the team which still keeps high school skiing flourishing in the Midwest today. After graduating, I joined the CXC professional team and when I was named to the US National Team in 2011, I also joined the SMS professional team. It took so many groups of people and organizations to give me the opportunity to race - my family, the ski community, coaches, high school teams, elite teams, you name it.

My first Birkie experience came at an early age and I'll never forget the excitement of seeing the screaming fans and watching skiers cross the finish line on Hayward's snow covered Main Street. Now, after skiing over 120 World Cup races all over the

world, I can tell you that the Birkie has something special about it. You can't quite put your finger on it - whether it's the fans, the enthusiastic racers, or the tired, frozen smiles on the faces of people finishing for the first time. Or, perhaps, it's the volunteers who spend hours working to make this event happen every year. The energy and excitement around the Birkie rivals that of a World Cup event and is the closest I've ever seen the U.S. come to having a "Norwegian Holmenkollen experience". Maybe it's so special because it takes the entire ski community to make it happen.

While I must have skied the Korte a dozen times, I'm still waiting for the winter when a World Cup calendar gap will let me come race the Birkie, I look forward to experiencing the same spark and energy that I remember. It takes a village, and that means YOU. If you enjoy being outside, if you value the ski community, there are many ways to help ensure that it stays as incredible as it is. You can volunteer, donate, sign up for a USSA license, coach or help run ski practice. It's not enough to simply enjoy the Birkie...it's time to love it, live it, and give back to the community that created it!

Learn more about Jessie Diggins at www.jessiediggins.com

Finding Your Local

—Annie Hart, Birkie Ambassador

The local movement is a powerful one. As a millennial with a generation defined by the omnipresence of Google and constant connectedness, living “local” is refreshing. Walking through the rainbow of stalls that is the Londonderry, Vermont Farmer’s Market, I love knowing that every fruit and vegetable is attached to a story. I know the name of the chicken who lays my favorite eggs (Lucy). I carry out conversations with the best honey-maker in town, and shamelessly test the wide variety of cheeses from the dairy down the road.

In Vermont it is pretty easy to keep things “local.” Our Stratton Mountain School Elite Team has the motto, “Local Inspiration, International Success.” We work hard to give back to the community that financially, emotionally, and physically cheers us on, and draw inspiration from the kids whose dreams are the same as ours. And, if our past season is any indication of the power of local inspiration (as a team we racked up several World Cup victories), local is paramount.

From a food perspective, the answer to why local reigns supreme is clear. Aside from the obvious health and environmental benefits, connecting with the people who provide me the food makes my morning eggs taste just a little better (that and really good butter). With ski racing, connecting with the “local” makes the victories just a bit sweeter, and the losses less bitter. Everyone shares in the success, and everyone supports each other in the disappointments. But creating a strong “local” isn’t always easy—especially in today’s world of constantly updating and typically hectic schedules.

This past Fall I had the great pleasure of traveling back to one of my favorite locales—my family’s cabin in Cable, Wisconsin. My trip landed perfectly over the Birkie Trail Run & Trek weekend, and I was psyched to join a relay team. The morning of the run dawned cool and foggy, and only knowing one of my relay members I nervously worked my way to the designated meeting point. I was met with hugs from my fellow relay buddies, and the promise that they wouldn’t hate me if I didn’t anchor us to victory. Fast forward several hours and I was sprinting to the **Ski. Run. Bike. Live!**



“ It is simply a group of like-minded individuals, discovering a shared passion, and working towards a collective goal. ”

line, with the cheers from not only my personal relay team but every other spectator out there. While our mixed-gender relay victory was indeed sweet and a definite highlight of the day, my favorite part was the expansion of my own personal “local.”

During the Birkie Trail Run, I met and interacted with many people whom I’d never met before. Each meeting brought me into contact with a different local, and in return I brought each of them a piece of my local. And this is how powerful locals are created. It is simply a group of like-minded individuals, discovering a shared passion and working towards a collective goal. Big things happen when locals coalesce— it is where “impossible” ideas turn into reality, where inspiration turns into action, and in my particular line of work where skiing dreams become skiing excellence.

My pursuit of skiing has led me to fabulous places, but most importantly it has put me in contact with hundreds of people, each bringing with them their own inspiration. I

am lucky to consider myself a part of many locals— from a Saturday Farmer’s Market in Vermont to a crossfit gym in California. You don’t have to be a professional ski racer to gain membership in different locals. You just have to take the risk, put yourself out there, and find things you are passionate about.

Want to learn how to Mountain Bike? Stop in your local bike shop and ask about group rides. Trying to figure out how to cook all that stuff from the Farmer’s Market? Take a minute and talk with the growers— they will be more than happy to help. They might even tell you their chickens’ names. Each of these small connections only begets more connections, which will have the inevitable result of expanding your local.

In a previous Birch Scroll article I gave everyone the challenge to figure out “Why They Birkie.” Because I love challenges (I am a cross country ski racer after all), I’m going to ask every reader to seek out new locals in the coming months. Sign up for the Birkie Trail Run & Trek weekend, join a cooking group, or volunteer at a local charity. Whatever it is, add another local to your repertoire (me!) and email annehart.smst2@gmail.com with your “local” success story.

Learn more Annie Hart at www.anniehart.com.

HONORING THE LEGACY • ENSURING THE FUTURE!

The Final Phase of our ABSF Capital Campaign

For all who enjoy the use of the Birkie Trail system, and for those who benefit from the thousands of silent sport enthusiasts who visit Sawyer and Bayfield counties each year, Phase 2 of our Honoring the Legacy – Ensuring the Future Capital Campaign promises to have a significant and positive impact on this incredible resource and our local communities.

The ABSF is committed to providing events for thousands of outdoor fitness fans of all ages and abilities; to ensuring the extensive Birkie Trail is maintained and accessible year-round to everyone; and most importantly, to encouraging and enabling a healthy active way of life. Skiers, race volunteers, mountain and fat bikers, hikers, runners, Nordic trekkers, and all others who use the trail system year-round will be able to enjoy the new venue, infrastructure, and trail improvements on race day and beyond!

Create Venues

Plans are underway for a new 'OO' Nordic Center - a gateway to facilitate a wide variety of outdoor activities for all - a place for people to gather, organize, rally, educate and come together. The planned facility will provide year-round access to heated bathrooms, a large gathering area, community room, kitchen area, vending space, and a wax and bike maintenance area. Adjacent to the Nordic Center, plans are in place for a multi-station fitness trail.

Infrastructure Improvements

The infrastructure additions of warming shelters at Timber Trail and Gravel Pit locations, along with drilled wells at all warming shelters, and a new County Highway 77 underpass near Fish Hatchery, will improve the efficiency of all Birkie events and the safety of participants, volunteers, and all others who utilize the extensive 107K Birkie Trail system throughout the year.

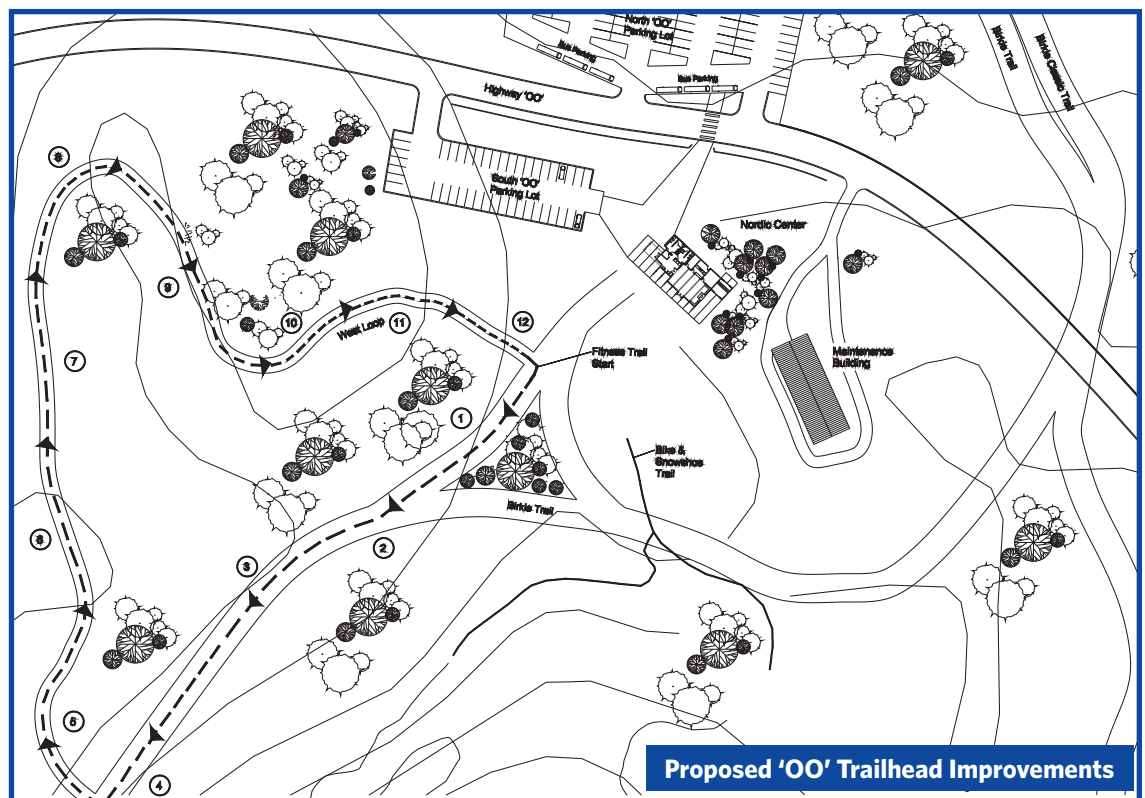
Trail Improvements

The quality of our events and sustainability of the Birkie Trail system requires rather extensive enhancement and repair to ensure its future. Additional improvements include the creation of a new Kortelopet start area, an initial investment in snowmaking equipment for low snow years, an additional 'wide' Pisten Bully 400 trail groomer, and the beginnings of the much anticipated extension of the Classic Trail from Highway OO south. The final phase of our capital campaign will allow us to improve the Birkie Trail, ensuring its sustainability for generations to come, and create opportunities that will inspire a lifestyle.

Be a Part of the Birkie Trail's Future

We invite you to partner with us to make the goals in this final fundraising phase a reality! Please consider donating to ensure the legacy and future of the Birkie Trail. For those who are interested, there are various opportunities available to leave your legacy either anonymously or with naming rights for select and limited locations. For further details, please contact Chris McGrath, ABSF Development Director, at 715-558-2451 or email chris.mcgrath@birkie.com. Or, visit www.birkie.com/future/phase-two.

- **Sustain** our valuable resources
- **Enable** safe access to trail system
- **Inspire** a healthy, active lifestyle
- **Provide** quality infrastructure
- **Improve** efficiency of all Birkie events



What's In It For You?

We know that you have plenty of opportunity to engage with any number of groups, foundations, or organizations. So, why the ABSF? What's in it for you? Our mission is simple. At the core, we believe in engaging, creating, and inspiring a healthy, active lifestyle. By becoming a member of the ABSF you help us to ensure the ability to host superior events like the Birkie, Fat Bike Birkie, and Birkie Trail Run & Trek, which provides a medium to stay active. As a member, you own a piece of knowing that the incredible Birkie Trail system is sustained both now and in the future. And, your support makes our development programming possible, assuring the health of silent sports for generations to come. The Birkie community is comprised of an inclusive group of self-described adventure enthusiasts – whether that means skiing, running, trekking, hiking or simply enjoying the beauty of the Birkie Trail. If what we stand for feels like home to you, we encourage you to join the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation as a member. For as little as .08 to .68 cents a day, you can make a difference. Plus, you can run for our Board of Directors, cast your vote on issues that drive the direction of the ABSF, and get great perks based on your membership level. Take your Birkie Fever to the next level and join us. For more information please visit www.birkie.com/membership.

Cast Your Vote for the ABSF Board of Directors!

If you're weary of today's culture of political mud-slinging, we think you'll like our candidates! It's time to vote for the ABSF Board of Directors! One of the many benefits of ABSF membership is the opportunity to vote for board candidates each year. Check out the 2016 candidate profiles at www.birkie.com/about/annual-meeting. Members will receive an electronic ballot in the near future to cast their vote! Who knows, maybe running for a seat on the board is in your future!

You're Invited! 2016 ABSF Annual Meeting & Fun Day

Join us on Saturday, August 6th for the ABSF Annual Meeting at the new American Birkebeiner Start-Line Trailhead! The day will begin with plenty of outdoor activities for all abilities and follow with a picnic style meeting. After the day's adventures, the afternoon social hour will begin at 4:30pm, with dinner at 6:00pm, and the meeting at 6:45pm. We will unveil our donor recognition wall and dedicate the new trailhead warming cabin. Cost for dinner and drinks is \$10 (free for kids under 12). Check out the schedule and register at www.birkie.com/about/annual-meeting.



New! American Birkebeiner Trailhead

So, Just What Does USSA CEO Think About the Birkie? Plenty!

The U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association (USSA) and American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation (ABSF) joined forces this past season to mutually grow awareness for the healthful, active outdoor lifestyle of cross country skiing. USSA President and CEO Tiger Shaw took part in his first cross country ski race, completing the 52K Birkie in four hours, 49 minutes.

“I’m proud of what I accomplished,” said Shaw. “But I was more exhilarated by all I witnessed over the weekend to showcase this vibrant sport.”

In this Q&A, Shaw reflects on his time at the Birkie and the future of USSA’s partnership with the biggest cross-country ski race in North America.

The USSA had a strong presence at the Birkie. What was the strategy?

It’s important for the USSA, and myself, to be engaged with each of our sports, including cross country. The ABSF is the leader in America with its broad participation. We wanted to acknowledge that and also use it as a time to bring different stakeholders in the sport together to talk about how we can unify under a common message. ABSF Executive Director Ben Popp is playing a strong leadership role there.

What was your most poignant moment of the weekend?

It was incredible to see so many juniors racing up Main Street, smiles on their faces and parents and family members in tow. For me, standing in the rain cheering on the Barnebirkie kids was memorable - really heartwarming and a great indicator for the future of the sport and event.

How was your race experience?

What really struck me from the start was the camaraderie among competitors. There was a nervous anxiety at the start, which ultimately translated into heart rate, breathing and getting in line up those hills – I did a lot of herringboning. But the aid station volunteers were a real highlight, always ready, able and helpful for every single skier.

The USSA runs many major events. What did you think of the logistics at the Birkie?

Running an event like the Birkie is akin to building a city and moving it 52 kilometers through the forest under challenging weather conditions. The organization was as good as anything I have ever seen, as were the attitudes and smiles. Really fun!



Tiger Shaw, USSA – Warms up for Birkie 2016.

Your wave was just starting when the elites were finishing. It was a good day for the USA!

It was especially gratifying to see the USA results against such a strong international Worldloppet field this year. David Norris had just won a pair of USSA SuperTour events and really came in with momentum. It was fun to

watch Caitlin Gregg pursue her goal of a record fourth title with such passion. She’s a great athlete and does a wonderful job taking her enthusiasm out to her kids program in Minneapolis.

What did you hear from skiers at the Birkie Expo?

It was fun to come into the Expo on Friday and see the huge lines forming for autographs with Kikkan Randall plus Caitlin and Brian Gregg. I had a good chance to chat with many skiers about their interest in the sport. That feedback will help me better understand how the USSA can be a stronger cross country partner.

Where does the partnership go from here?

The USSA will continue to work closely with the ABSF, as well as other organizations in the sport such as the National Nordic Foundation, CXC, NENSA and more. I see us uniting under a common message about the healthful lifestyle represented by cross country skiing and each of us using our platforms to encourage greater participation.

To learn more about USSA’s nordic programs, visit www.ussa.org/joinnordic.

Plan to join us next winter in West Yellowstone, Montana

November	November 22-26 • Yellowstone Ski Festival
December	Spam Cup #1 CLASSIC 1k, 5k, 15k Biathlon Cup #1 Sprint
January	Free Ski & Try Biathlon Day Spam Cup #2 Freestyle 1k, 5k, 10k Biathlon Cup #2 Pursuit
February	Taste of the Trails Biathlon Cup #3 Mass Start
March	Yellowstone Rendezvous Race Kids 'N' Snow Youth Ski Festival Tour de Spam

www.skirunbikemt.com

West Yellowstone TBID

A Legacy Comes to Life!

Each February over 10,000 cross-country skiers gather in Cable and Hayward, Wisconsin, to take part in North America's largest and greatest ski race, the American Birkebeiner. An iconic world-class sporting event, for over 40-years the Birkie has helped shape the lives of tens of thousands of participants from elite athletes to recreational citizen skiers. To commemorate the legacy of the race and inspire future generations, the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation (ABSF) is pleased to announce the Grand Opening of the Tony Wise Museum of the American Birkebeiner.

The American Birkebeiner ski race was the vision of Hayward native Tony Wise, who discovered skiing as a soldier serving in Germany in World War II. After the war, he brought his concept home to found Telemark Lodge, near Cable, WI, and later evolved the concept into a cross-country ski race through the north woods of Wisconsin. Wise's vision shaped a community, a sport, and brought the world together with the founding of the Worldloppet, an international sports federation of cross-country skiing marathons.

The Museum will tell the story of the ori-

gin of the Birkebeiner through lively, state-of-the-art exhibits infused with Birkie spirit. Visitors will view historic film and photographs, listen to Birkie stories as told by founding skiers, and experience what it feels like to be at the starting line or volunteering at an aid station. There will be hands-on activities, demonstrations, a 3D trail model, and numerous race artifacts and memorabilia. We invite you to join us for the museum's opening celebration!



Tony Wise Museum of the American Birkebeiner Grand Opening Celebration!

Friday, August 5, 2016 • 6:00pm
10527 Main Street, Hayward, Wisconsin

RSVP by July 29 to birkie@birkie.com or 715-634-5025

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Birkie – Korte – Prince Haakon
Register Now! Waves are filling fast!
February 24 & 25 • www.Birkie.com

2016 Race Results Correction

While we do our best to confirm that the over 10,000 Birkie, Korte and Prince Haakon participant names are listed and accurate in the results issue of the Birch Scroll, every once in a while we inadvertently miss a name in the process. We apologize for the oversight. The following hearty souls finished the American Birkebeiner and Prince Haakon in 2016.

2016 Prince Haakon: Elizabeth Adler, St. Paul, MN – 52:37.1

2016 51K Birkie Skate Women 70 to 74: Ethel Morse, Hayward, WI – 2nd Place, 4:50:58.2

2016 51K Birkie Skate Women 75 to 79: Judith Karshna, Park Falls, WI – 1st Place, 8:34:35.6

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Making A Difference, One Skier at a Time

Each year, the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation (ABSF) provides grant funding opportunities to programs that promote and encourage sport growth. Awarded organizations often bring cross-country skiing to their local area through trail maintenance, purchase of rental equipment, development of youth programming, coaching seminars, and much more. Over the past year, the ABSF received an unprecedented number of grant requests and selected a number of exceptional programs to further our mission of supporting healthy active lifestyles for people of all ages and abilities. In fact, as you read this, the ABSF will have awarded over \$422,000, cumulatively, to cross-country ski and sporting programs across the United States since the inception of the Development Grant Program.

“We’ve found that lifestyle sports are, unfortunately, not always taught in schools,” said Ben Popp, ABSF Executive Director. “It is important to the ABSF that we create opportu-

As of 2016, the ABSF has awarded over \$422,000 to healthy, active lifestyle programs across the U.S.A.

nities to expose the next generation to healthy, active lifestyle sports and to carry on the incredible Nordic legacy of the Birkie.”

The ABSF Development Grant Program was created in support of the core values of the Foundation and is funded, in part, through our dedicated ABSF membership. Because of you, our ABSF members, many youth skiers stepped into skis for the very first time. Because of you, students were able to get outside after school and enjoy the great outdoors. Because of you, there are trails in communities where there never were before. Because of you, coaches were able help new skiers of all ages discover the intrinsic love of Nordic sports and embrace a healthy, active lifestyle. Because of you, Birkie Fever is alive and well nationwide.

Criteria for consideration when selecting

ABSF grant recipients includes the creation of new or expansion of existing cross-country ski programs, sustainable programs that promote cross-country skiing, initiatives that demonstrate an ability to promote the Birkie mission and lifestyle within a community, and programs that have matching grants. Additionally, programs that support running, biking, and other off-season programs for skiers, youth, adults and coaches, are also considered and supported by the ABSF Development Grant program. Awarded each fall, organizations interested in applying for future ABSF Development Grants will find application information at www.Birkie.com/live.

Congratulations to our 2015-2016 ABSF Development Grant Recipients!

Congratulations to all of the ABSF 2015 – 2016 Grant Recipients

4-H CANSKI – Ashland, WI

Blackhawk Ski Club – Madison, WI

Blue Hills Trail Association – Bruce, WI

Boy and Girls Club of Rosebud – Rosebud, SD

CXC – Verona, WI

Gaylord Middle School Cross Country Ski Team – Gaylord, MI

Hayward Nordic Ski Team – Hayward, WI

Lodi Area XC Ski Club – Lodi, WI

Minocqua Winter Park – Minocqua, WI

Northern Kettle Moraine Nordic Ski Club – Glenbaulah, WI

Red Wing Nordic Team – Red, Wing, MN

Whittier Elementary Ski and Bike Club – Minneapolis, MN

Madnorski East Huskis – Sun Prairie, WI

Central High School Nordic Ski Booster Club – St. Paul, MN

Hurley Nordic Ski Team – Hurley, WI

Duluth East High School Nordic Ski Team – Duluth, MN

Iola Winter Sports Club – Iola, WI

Endurance United – St. Paul, MN

Wausau Nordic United HS Team – Wausau, WI

Minnesota Youth Ski League – Minneapolis, MN

Winona Community Foundation Inc. – Winona, MN

St. Paul Central Nordic Ski Team – St. Paul, MN

Spooner Youth Ski Club – Spooner, WI

Trail Kids – Hayward, WI

4H Outdoor Adventure Club – Hayward, WI



A Few Words from Our Grant Recipients ...



“Every day I design games and activities for the kids, but they just want to ski!”

“Because of your support, over 22 students had access to something fundamentally Minnesotan (and Wisconsin)!”



“Thanks for supporting our team.”

“Forty-four middle schoolers will get to experience the outdoors and be part of something positive!”

“We are so grateful for your contribution!”

“Our students have discovered the intrinsic love of the sport.”

“We are forever grateful for the start-up funds you gave us.”

“Students are excited to be active outside during winter and often comment how much they enjoy cross-country skiing at school.”



“Thank you so much for your extreme generosity!”

“This ski equipment is sure to be enjoyed by so many kids for years to come!”

“We were able to purchase 33 sets of cross-country equipment!”

“You are the real American Hero!”

“Muchas gracias!”

“Students gain an awareness of what cross country skiing is and where they can do it.”

“We cannot thank the Birkie Foundation enough for helping us to instill a life-long love of Nordic skiing in our youth.”





American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation

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45NRTN Fat Bike Birkie • March 11, 2017 • Register now at www.Birkie.com!