



American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation
Annual Report
2015-2016





Message from ABSF Board President

Dear American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation Member,

Through your ongoing support, your foundation continues to thrive! The American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation is enjoying a period of tremendous growth.

This past year we've been reflective, yet jubilant at the exciting opportunities ahead. We've gathered a treasure trove of memories and artifacts for all to enjoy in the new Tony Wise

Museum of the American Birkebeiner. ABSF programming designed to promote an active lifestyle continues to grow through programs like Birkie Trail Kids and On The Trail to Fitness. Interest in fat biking is exploding and we've answered the call by increasing the participant cap for the 2017 Fat Bike Birkie. The Birkie Expo has expanded and new sponsors have excitedly joined the year-round Birkie community. The Kortelopet will have their own moment to shine with a dedicated start area at 'OO' and exciting finish on Hayward's snow-covered Main Street. Participants and volunteers will appreciate the new warming huts and addition of wells at aid station locations.

“... the ABSF is, perhaps, healthier and more robust than it's ever been before.”

A very successful Phase I of the ABSF Capital Campaign is complete, ensuring the future of the Birkie. You're invited to join us as we dedicate the new American Birkebeiner Trailhead this August. With our sights set on improving the Birkie Trail system, adding grooming equipment, and beginning construction of a new Nordic Center at 'OO,' the ABSF is, perhaps, healthier and more robust than it's ever been before.

I thank you for your past support and ask for your continued help in growing and securing the Birkie lifestyle for all who embrace it now and for generations to come.

Best-

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Eckerline". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul Eckerline, President – ABSF Board of Directors



Message from ABSF Executive Director

Hello from the Birkie,

As I reflect on the past year, it's clear that 2015-2016 was a year of building! After successfully completing Phase 1 of our first ever Capital Campaign, we put your generosity to work! We purchased a piece of land adjacent to Telemark and the Cable Union Airport to construct a new permanent start line for the American Birkebeiner, as well as a year-round trailhead to ski, bike, and run from no matter the season. In less than a year the site is completed, ready for use, and will be dedicated in August!



With the loss of Telemark Lodge as a centerpiece of Birkie history, creating a medium to remember our past has become more important than ever. Through the generosity and support of the entire Birkie community, we are thrilled that the Tony Wise Museum of the American Birkebeiner will open its doors in August. The museum will be a place to remember our history, inspire the next generation, and relive our own personal Birkie moments.

“We are committed to inspiring, supporting, and embracing a year-round, healthy, active Birkie Lifestyle.”

Lastly, we recently kicked off the final phase of our *Honoring the Legacy – Ensuring the Future* Capital Campaign. The resources raised through this campaign will be used to sustain our valuable resources, improve infrastructure and event efficiency, create venues to inspire, enable access, and ensure the Birkie lifestyle for generations to come. We encourage you to review our plans and, as always, we are extremely grateful for your support in helping the vision become a reality.

The American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation will continue to strengthen our partnerships with other silent sport advocates by creating programming, funding, and opportunities to ensure the lifestyle we cherish and the mission we hold dear. We are committed to inspiring, supporting, and embracing a year-round, healthy, active Birkie Lifestyle.

It is my personal hope that each and every one of you has the best possible Birkie experience. Don't hesitate to reach out to me, or the Birkie staff, if you have any questions or need help with an event related matter.

See you in the north woods soon!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Popp'.

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.

Honoring the Legacy

It all began in 1206...

Following the death of the Norwegian King Haakon Sverresson, two rivaling factions, the Baglers and the Birkebeiners, fought to gain control of Norway. To keep the King's son, Haakon Haakonsson, from being killed by the Baglers, and to maintain control of the throne, two Birkebeiner warriors, Torstein Skevla and Skjervald Skrukka, skied the child prince through the treacherous mountains of Norway to safety.

Norwegian history credits the Birkebeiners' bravery with preserving the life of the boy who later became the king who united Norway, after 1000 years of civil war, and led the country into a time of peace.

The name Birkebeinere was given by the Baglers, and was originally intended to be offensive - referring to the leggings of birch bark they wore - indicating that they were poor and incapable. The Birkebeiners proved the Baglers wrong and today the name is synonymous with pride, strength, and endurance.

Each year thousands of adventurous spirits honor the determination and courage of the warriors as they recreate the Birkebeiner's journey through the forests of northern Wisconsin in the American Birkebeiner.



Tony Wise, American Birkebeiner Founder, passes away - Hayward, WI **1995**



American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation is founded - Hayward, WI **1984**



Elites only race six laps on an 8K track around Mt. Telemark due to lack of snow - Cable, WI **1981**

1993
Race direction becomes permanent North to South - Cable to Hayward, WI



1981
Two weeks later, citizen skiers complete Birkie race - Hayward to Cable, WI



1978
Worldloppet is Founded - Uppsala, Sweden



Kortelopet becomes official name of short race **1977**

First Citizen Race (early Kortelopet) - Cable to Seeley, WI **1973**

1973
First American Birkebeiner Ski Race - Hayward to Cable, WI



Prince Haakon rescued by Birkebeiner Warriors - Norway **1206**

1932
First Norwegian Birken Ski Race - Mt. Raufjellet, Norway

1206



1980 Fun Fact!

Carol Duffy, Hayward, WI 1st Worldloppet Master Skier

First person to complete all Worldloppet races.

2015



First Fat Bike Birkie
- Cable, WI
2013

2015
International Bridge is
recreated and unveiled
- Hayward, WI



2010
First official BirkieTour
- Cable, WI



Birkie shortened to
25K for lack of
snow
- Cable, WI to 'OO'
2007

2008
Inauguration of
Birkie Classic Trail
in American
Birkebeiner race
- Cable to Hayward, WI



2007
Only elite skiers
are timed, open ski
for citizen skiers
- Cable to Hayward, WI

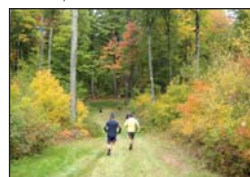
Skiers For
Cures created
- Hayward, WI
2006

2005
First Prince Haakon race
- Hayward, WI



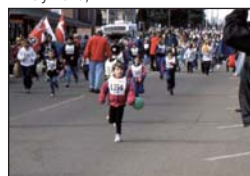
Birkie race canceled
for lack of snow
- Hayward, WI
2000

2002
First Birkie Trail Run & Trek
- Cable, WI



2000
First Junior
Birkie Race
- Hayward, WI

1998
El Niño brings shortened
Birkie and Korte, a
Barnebirkie foot race, and
Elite Sprints on roller-skis
- Hayward, WI



And, today, is so much more...

While the American Birkebeiner ski race began in 1973, the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation* was formed in 1984 in support of the then fledgling ski race. Since then, the American Birkebeiner has grown to become the largest cross-country ski race in North America and part of a nearly week-long Nordic ski festival held each February in northern Wisconsin. But, what about the rest of the year?

Embracing their silent sports passion and with a mind to expanding year-round opportunities, the ABSF added the Birkie Trail Run & Trek, the Fat Bike Birkie, and more. The new events, along with sports programming, rounded out the ABSF's yearly calendar of outdoor activities and provided occasion to engage with even more adventurous spirits.

The ABSF's commitment to hosting best-in-class events and inspiring folks of all ages and abilities to get active is at the core of their mission. And, for the ABSF staff, maintaining the expansive and legendary Birkie Trail system is a labor of love. From grooming snow in winter to mowing grass in summer, the ABSF is responsible for 100% of the ongoing maintenance and associated costs of the Birkie Trail - one of the nation's premier recreational trail systems.

What lies at the heart of it all? Birkie Fever, pure and simple. The original founding skiers of the American Birkebeiner had no idea what they were setting into motion. What was born on a starting line in 1973 is now so much more than just one race. Whether running, biking or skiing...Birkie Fever is a feeling and a passion held all year through.

*501(c)(3) non-profit

A Year in Review: 2015 – 2016

A Year Awash with Building, Excitement and Change

Ask any ABSF staffer and they'll tell you that on occasion they're asked, "What is it that you do all year?" Some folks are surprised to learn that the Birkie lifestyle of year-round events has ABSF staff and board bustling all year through. Summer months are particularly busy with the advent of a new fiscal year. You'll find staff members poring over details, plans, permits, programming, and all the finer points that make Birkie events best-in-class. It is our constant goal to ensure the best possible experience for every Birkie participant at every event; we know the difference between something great and something exceptional is in the details.

2015-2016 brought abuzz of activity with creation of the new American Birkebeiner Trailhead and start line; a place to ski, bike, and run from no matter the season. The new space includes a Great Hall for equipment storage and warmth on event days; a new large bus drop-off and parking area; event infrastructure - sound system, fences, and more; as well as a small warming shelter for year-round use. This past year also marked the opening of the new Birkie retail store; work on the new Kortelopet start area; establishment of a new connector trail to the Powerlines; and, of course, preparation for the new Tony Wise Museum of the American Birkebeiner.

The Birkie lifestyle is truly one for all seasons. As we tackle event details and make plans, we're exceedingly thankful for the Birkie community and the lifestyle that you hold dear. It is what drives us to do what we do, in support of you, day after day and year after year.

A Year at the ABSF July 2015 – August 2016



Lumberjack Run, Birkie partners with Lumberjack World Championships
July 2015



First Ultra Marathon at Birkie Trail Run & Trek - Cable, WI
September 2015



Birkie Ambassador Program is created - Annie Hart, Caitlin & Brian Gregg, Ambassadors
November 2015



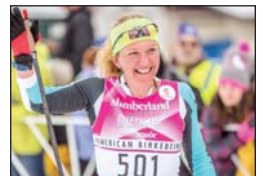
Hearty souls ski the BirkieTour from Birkie Ridge
January 2016

January 2016
Birkie Trail selected in USA Today Best Trails in the USA contest



American Birkebeiner becomes FIS 2016 Marathon Cup Race
February 2016

February 2016
Caitlin Gregg - 1st skier to win four American Birkebeiner races



October 2015
Purchase of land for permanent start, construction begins



August 2015
Announcement of Tony Wise Museum of the American Birkebeiner



2015

American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation

2016



BIRKEBEINERNE (THE LAST KING)
Norwegian feature film
North American premiere
in Hayward, WI
February 2016

March 2016
Fat Bike Birkie starts and
finishes in Cable, WI



Creation of the
Foundation for the
Endowment of the
American
Birkebeiner
April 2016

April 2016
Announcement - 2017
Korteløpet and Prince
Haakon races to finish in
downtown Hayward



Fat Bike Birkie, world's
largest fat bike race,
increases cap to
1200 riders
May 2016

Mayo Clinic &
ABSF Study is
Published in
BMJ Open
Journal
June 2016

June 2016
ABSF final Capital
Campaign Phase 2 launches



Proposed Nordic Center/Side View



American Birkebeiner
Trailhead and start line
construction completed
July 2016

Dedication of
American
Birkebeiner
Trailhead and
new start line
August 2016

August 2016
Grand Opening of
Tony Wise Museum of
the American Birkebeiner



Tony Wise Museum of the American Birkebeiner

Each February cross-country skiers from around the world gather to take part in North America's largest ski race, the American Birkebeiner. To commemorate the legacy of the race and inspire future generations, the ABSF is pleased to announce the opening of the Tony Wise Museum of the American Birkebeiner.

The 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, Wise brought his concept home to found Telemark Ski Resort, near Cable, WI, and later evolved the concept into a cross-country ski race through the north woods. 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.

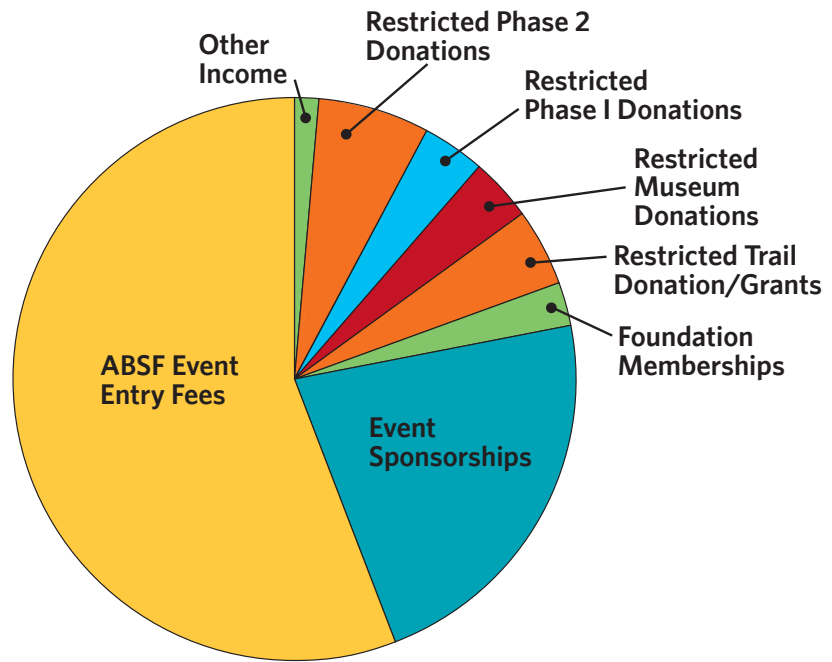
The museum tells the story of the origin of the Birkebeiner through lively, state-of-the-art, interactive exhibits infused with Birkie spirit. Visitors will view historic film and photographs, listen to Birkie stories as told by founding skiers, engage with a 3D model of the Birkie race course, view artifacts and memorabilia, and see the St. Olav medal presented to Tony Wise by the King of Norway.

We are grateful for generous support from Johnson Bank, the Johnson Family Foundation, Marc Hodler Foundation of the International Ski Federation, Walmart, the Birchleggings Club, and more than 350 individuals. Many memorabilia items were gifted to the museum from the family of Tony Wise, past Birkie champions, founding skiers, citizen skiers, and from gracious donors. Thank you.

American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation 2015-2016

ABSF Annual Income 2015-2016

ABSF Events Entry Fees	\$1,415,000.00
Event Sponsorships	\$533,000.00
Foundation Memberships	\$64,000.00
Restricted Trail Donation/Grants	\$111,000.00
Restricted Museum Donations	\$90,803.00
Restricted Phase I Donations	\$88,302.00
Restricted Phase 2 Donations	\$165,565.00
Other Income	\$ 30,170.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$2,497,840.00



ABSF Annual Expenses 2015-2016

BirkieTour	\$31,893.00
Fat Bike Birkie	\$50,070.00
Birkie Trail Run & Trek	\$ 55,152.00
Lumberjack Run	\$2,663.00
American Birkebeiner Week of Events	\$1,110,242.00
Trail, Facilities, Equipment	\$256,270.00
Event and Foundation Staff	\$217,000.00
Administration	\$139,000.00
Marketing, Expo, Promotions	\$277,000.00
Sport Development and Grants	\$68,000.00
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$2,207,290.00
*NET INCOME	\$290,550.00

* 2015-2016 Fixed Asset Costs for Capital Campaign Phase I, Phase 2, and Museum Projects totaling \$697,127 are not reflected in operating costs.



The Future is in Exceptional Hands

With the advent of the *Honoring the Legacy - Ensuring the Future* Capital Campaign, many donors expressed an interest in contributing to a permanent fund designed to provide continuous support for the benefit of the ABSF. We are pleased to announce the creation of the Foundation for the Endowment of the American Birkebeiner, Inc. (FEAB).

FEAB was created to ensure the sustainability and future of the ABSF and its activities, and is administered by a dedicated and experienced Board of Trustees. Endowment fund donations can be made in many ways including gifts, grants, bequests, and can be directed to specific purposes. We are confident that the future of the ABSF, and all it stands for, is in exceptional hands.

Phase 1 Capital Campaign a Resounding Success

Birkie Passions Truly Run Deep

When we launched our first ever capital campaign late in 2014, we couldn't have predicted the outpouring of support from so many. With gifts both large and small, the Birkie community embraced the vision in seemingly record time. Work began in earnest in summer of 2015, and one short year later, the new American Birkebeiner Trailhead and permanent race start area, along with the International Bridge, are realities. Birkie passions truly run deep.

It is important to the ABSF that we express our thanks to the people and organizations who banded together to raise the \$727,667 to make this happen. With this in mind, we are pleased to share details of the Phase 1 Donor Honor Wall, a structure noting the many generous individuals who helped bring the goals to fruition. Located at the new start area, the Phase 1 Donor Honor Wall is a permanent feature and will be formally dedicated, along with the new trailhead buildings, at our Annual Meeting in August. We extend a heartfelt thank you for sharing our vision and for your ongoing support of the ABSF.

Phase 1 Capital Campaign Improvements



Built in homage to the past, the International Bridge provided safe access to Main Street as skiers raced their way to the finish line. In 2017 the International bridge will span four lanes over Highway 63, improving traffic flow through the heart of Hayward, WI.



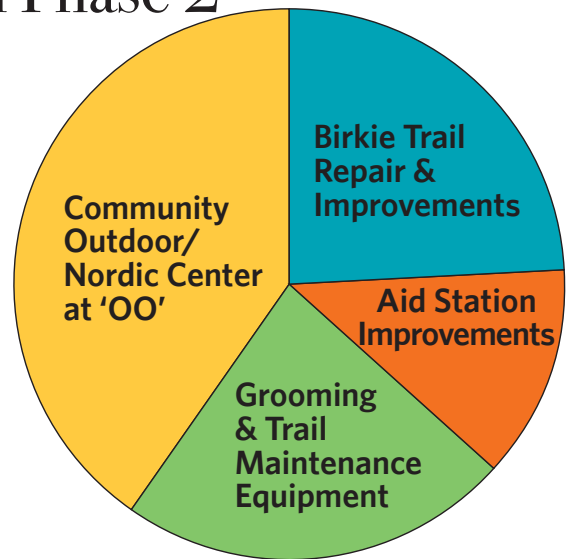
The American Birkebeiner Trailhead and new permanent start area, complete with Great Hall and trailhead building, will be unveiled and dedicated at the ABSF Annual Meeting in August.

Ensuring the Future

Capital Campaign Phase 2

Phase 2 Capital Campaign - Planned Expenses

Birkie Trail Repair & Improvements	\$395,000.00
Birkie Trail Aid Station Improvements	\$208,000.00
Grooming & Trail Maintenance Equipment	\$ 375,000.00
Community Outdoor/Nordic Center at 'OO'	\$655,000.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,633,000.00



Igniting the Torch

We've entered the final phase of the *Honoring the Legacy - Ensuring the Future* Capital Campaign. Funds raised in Phase 2 will allow us to improve Birkie Trail infrastructure and access; provide sustainable solutions for the increase in trail usage; acquire the equipment necessary to maintain the 100+ kilometer trail system; as well as create a facility for a wide variety of outdoor activities. The planned Nordic Center at the 'OO' Trailhead is destined to become a rally point for people to gather, organize, educate, and come together. For those who appreciate and utilize the Birkie Trail system, new trailhead shelters at Timber Trail and Gravel Pit locations, and an underpass at Highway 77 and Fish Hatchery Road, will provide safer year-round trail access. Whether you ski, run, bike, or trek, the trail maintenance equipment upgrades will enhance the experience for all on race day and beyond.

We need your help to make this happen. Working together, we have the opportunity to ignite the torch to guarantee the future of the Birkie Trail system and the lifestyle that has so positively impacted the lives of so many. We thank you, in advance, for your consideration and support. If you're interested in learning more, please contact Chris McGrath, ABSF Development Director at chris.mcgrath@birkie.com or 715-634-5025, ext 4.

American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation - Phase 2



Sustain
our valuable
resources



Enable
safe access to
the trail system



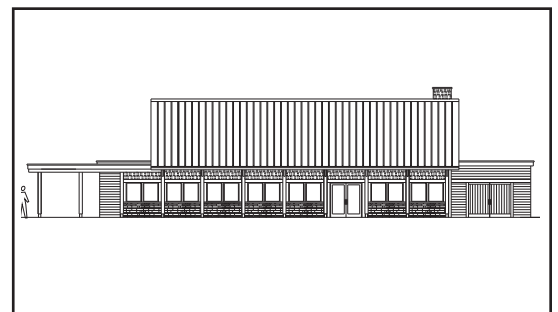
Inspire
a healthy,
active lifestyle



Provide
quality
infrastructure



Improve
efficiency of
ABSF events



Proposed Nordic Center at 'OO'

A Peek Behind the Scenes

We all know that the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation is comprised of an amazing membership of silent sport enthusiasts, adrenalin junkies, and lovers of the great outdoors. How we bring our mission of dedicated stewardship of the Birkie Trail, promotion of a healthy lifestyle, and creation of world-class events to life, is also well known.

What may not be as apparent is the magnitude of equipment, employees, participants, volunteers, villages, towns, and general infrastructure it takes to make it all happen. The sheer volume can be mind-boggling. We invite you to take a peek behind the scenes of the ABSF for a snapshot of a fraction of what encompasses your foundation in 2015-2016.

1000+ Members

9 Trailheads

1 Museum

11 Full-Time Employees

12 Seasonal/Part-Time Employees

2500+ Volunteers

9 Cities, Townships & Counties

3 Piston Bully Snow Groomers

100+ Kilometers of Trail

250,000+ Participants since 1973

100+ BANNERS

4 Snowmobiles

1000+ Signs of all Sorts

20,000+ Event & Programming Participants per Year

1 SKID STEER

100,000+ Birkie Trail Users per Year

1 Dump Truck

2 Utility Task Vehicles

9 Buildings

25+ Beverage Dispensers

1 International Bridge

18 Rental Tents

15,000+ Bibs

89 Acres of ABSF Land

100+ Flags

1 Champions Podium

1 Store

1 Tractor

13 ABSF Board Members

3500+ Cups of Staff Coffee

1 Excellent Coffee Maker

65 Dump Trucks of Snow for Hayward's Main Street

Unlimited #BirkieFever

