

February 10, 2012

Greetings fellow Birchleggers,

It seems that every year I am compelled to begin this newsletter by commenting on the state of the season's snow conditions. After two great winters, we have again been faced with fickle snow and temperature patterns across the region. Fortunately, the Birkie trails endured all these vacillations and the relatively thin snow base has been well maintained and preserved. Most of you will probably be delighted to hear that we have recently received three to four inches of unexpected new snow to considerably tame the lightning fast conditions that prevailed the last couple of weeks. A bit more snow appears to be in the forecast for the final week. Unfortunately, the same forecast also shows some temperatures reminiscent of last year's. I hope they are wrong on that one. All in all, there is reason to be optimistic about another great event.

Some updates:

Birchleggings Awards Breakfast

We will again have our **Annual Birchleggings Awards Breakfast** on Sunday, at the **Lumberjack Steakhouse**, next to Flat Creek Suites & Inn (formerly Ramada Inn) on Highway 27 in Hayward. As in the past, we will keep the **9 AM** time. The arrangements are similar, i.e. buffet style breakfast at approximately \$10.00 per person (no charge for new inductees), tickets purchased at the door. We will follow with award presentations and perhaps a short business meeting. We hope to see many of you there, particularly the new inductees and those of you who missed us last year. Vegard Ulvang will be this year's special guest at the Birkie and at our breakfast. (see http://www.birkie.com/news_article/show/131284?referrer_id=104564)



Tony Wise Birkie Spirit Award to David Nelson

A major highlight at our Awards Breakfast the last two years has been the presentation of the Tony Wise Birkie Spirit Award. We had the pleasure of honoring three special individuals, Sven Wiik, Marty Hall and Frances Wise. This time, I am delighted to announce the 2012 recipient, David Nelson. David is our fellow Birchlegger, serves on the ABSF board of directors, but is most famous for his talent in designing, building and promoting cross country ski trails. If you have been enjoying the new Birkie Classic Trail, you can thank David for its existence.

Birchleggers Hut at Mosquito Brook Road built and open for use.

In 2010, Executive Director Ned Zuelsdorff proposed a plan to construct several buildings along the Birkie trail for storage of some of the equipment needed during the race and other Birkie sponsored events. The plan was approved by the board of directors and the concept was expanded to use a portion of some of the structures as warming cabins. The first modest structure was built last year at the intersection with the Bodecker Road. Since the main funding for these structures was to be obtained by soliciting sponsorships, the Birchleggings Club saw the opportunity to contribute and also to put its name on a visible object. It was agreed that the next cabin to be built at the Mosquito Brook Road would be fully funded by the Club and would be named "The Birchleggers Hut". A fellow skier and architect Terry Penman was retained to develop the plan with emphasis on aesthetics. The hut is larger than the one at Bodecker road and the warming hut portion is larger than the storage section. The finishing touches are still going on but it has a wood stove and is ready to use. Check it out next time you ski in the area. We

are now looking for a design of an attractive and very visible sign to show off our name and logo. The hut, of course, is open to all. It is our gift to the skiing community, but we will have every opportunity to equip and decorate the interior as we like. I see a great potential here - Ideas?



Photo: John & daughter Katie, 2/12/12

More Founder-like, red racing bibs to be seen on the Trail this year.

There once were ten individuals wearing the red "Founder" bib in the race (the ten who completed the first ten consecutive Birkebeiners). These ten individuals, over the years, came to symbolically commemorate the roots of the event and inspire younger skiers to keep returning to the race and help to maintain a strong tradition. Inevitably, over forty years, these numbers have shrunk. Many skiers have expressed the value of these bibs to the race. Over a beer one evening, a fellow board member and Birchlegger John Leighton and I brainstormed ways to perpetuate the presence of the red bibs. We quickly came up with the idea of printing a limited number of bibs to be worn by those with the most Birkie completions. The next question was "how many"? Thinking of my fellow founders, my mind quickly reached into 1973 and I realized there were only 35 skiers in the first race, so why not commemorate all of them--35 red bibs. Now, what inscription should replace "founder"? This took a little more brainstorming. Driving home from our cabin one day, my wife Nina and 13 year-old daughter Katie worked on the task. We had the number 35 to work with, but it was hard to come up with a supporting word or short phrase. Then our minds turned to our fellow founder David Landgraf, just lost to a tragic accident. We could still hear Dave's favorite song that was played at his memorial services: Spirit in the Sky. We tossed around the word "spirit" for a while and then Katie came up with "Spirit of Thirtyfive". It was perfect, no need for further search. The Birkie Board of Directors unanimously accepted the proposal. *(Note: Final selection of who gets to wear a red bib is based on order of completion of the greatest number--so keep up with your training!)*

Status of Birchleggings Club incorporation as a 501(c) corporation

The volunteer Birchleggings Club steering committee met in Cable last Fall to discuss the incorporation process. The application process for incorporation is rather simple, however documentation to qualify for tax-exempt status is a bit more involved. I have been looking for a volunteer attorney from our club to give us some guidance. If you have expertise in this area, please contact me. We hope to move aggressively on this again as soon as we put this year's Birkie behind us. We will keep you informed through our web site.

Paying your membership dues is crucial to the functioning of your club.

Annual membership dues are our only source of funding for our projects. The funds are used to produce awards, contribute to TW Legacy Fund and cover Awards Breakfast costs for new members. Now we have added a major funding project, The Birchleggers Hut. We will be discussing additional fund raising options to help with this item.

In Memoriam

Birchleggers Dave Landgraf, Phil Schaefer, and Richard Jarvinen passed away in 2011. They will be remembered and missed by the Birkie community.

See you at Birkie XXXIX

John Kotar

President

If this will be your 20th Birkebeiner please read on:

Dear Birkebeiner Veteran,

Upon completion of this year's Birkebeiner you will have earned the privilege of becoming a member of the Birchleggings Club, an informal but prestigious organization of skiers who have completed 20 or more Birkies. We congratulate you for your achievement and welcome you to our group, now numbering over 1000 committed Birkie veterans.

Starting with this year's race you will have a privilege of wearing a special purple and gold Birchleggings race bib. You will also receive a classy award. If you have not seen one, it consists of 4.5" x 5.5" clear acrylic plate (looks like glass) with attached brushed-gold coin with a multilevel die image of our logo. A brass plate on the walnut base includes your name and the year of your 20th finish.

We cordially invite you to be our guest at our Annual Birchleggings Awards breakfast where you will be individually recognized. The awards will be mailed to those who could not attend.

We are looking forward to seeing you at the race and our awards event.

2012 BIRCHLEGGINGS CLUB ANNUAL FEE just \$25

Birchlegger (name) _____

Address _____

Phone(s) _____ Email _____

Send dues to Dave Balsiger (address below) or see Dave at the Awards Breakfast on Sunday.

AMERICAN BIRKEBEINER BIRCHLEGGINGS CLUB
<http://www.birchleggings.com/>

David Balsiger, Treasurer
dbalsiger@aol.com
5703 Lincoln Rd.
Oregon, WI 53575
608-835-8410



John Kotar, President
jkotar@wisc.edu
2662 W. Princeton Ave.
Eau Claire, WI 54703
715-835-1246

The Birchleggings Club now has connections through Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.