

Meet Monica Zappa

Monica Zappa is a musher living in the Caribou Hills of Alaska who is preparing to make her rookie run in the 2014 Iditarod. She grew up in Cumberland, Wisconsin where her family mushed dogs and ran mid-distance races when she was young. She earned her BS in Meteorology from St. Cloud State University and her MS in Geography from Northern Illinois University. In June, 2010 she moved to Alaska to try her hand at mushing. She teamed up with Tim Osmar and has been breeding, raising, and training sled dogs with him for the last three years.

This is the year for her to make her first attempt at the race because, as she says, “the stars are aligning.” She is really excited about the dogs that she and Tim have been raising and she really believes in their potential. While she hopes to win the race within the next five to six years, this year it is all about getting to Nome with happy and healthy dogs. Most of the dogs on the team this year will be under three years old and will be learning the trail right along with Monica.

Fundraising is Monica’s biggest worry about the race right now. She estimates she will need around \$20,000 to run the race. She has been selling t-shirts and looking for sponsors to help with the costs. Keeping her feet warm is another concern! She thinks she will need at least 25 pairs of really, really good socks to keep her toes warm!

While it has been too warm to run the dogs during the summer, she has been reading books by other mushers as a way to start to prepare for the race. She has a great resource in her partner Tim also! He has run the Iditarod twenty-three times placing in the Top 5 six times and the Top 10 ten times. His dad, Dean, won the Iditarod in 1984 (on his second attempt!).

In the summer, Monica and Tim live in Kasilof where they set net fish for salmon. The salmon are a major part of their lives and the lives of many people in the area who live a subsistence lifestyle. Because of this, one of Monica’s purposes for running the Iditarod is to raise awareness for a cause that is near and dear to her heart: Save Bristol Bay. There is a massive gold and copper mine being proposed for the area that could cause irreparable damage to the environment and fish in the area. As she travels the trail she hopes to educate people about the mine and the damage it could cause.

The two important lessons she has learned that she will carry into the Iditarod are to tie everything to your sled and to not panic when you think you are lost!

As we get closer and closer to the race, Monica is going to keep us up to date on her preparations and training. It is going to be a lot of fun cheering Monica all the way to Nome!