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**Iditarod Trail Committee**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 14, 2020

**The Iditarod launches new dog care initiative**

*Pike Dog Wellness First Initiative will provide Iditarod mushers with veterinary care funding for their race teams to mitigate the impact of COVID-19*

**Wasilla, Alaska** – The Iditarod, to further cement its commitment to excellence in dog care and help out the mushing community during the COVID-19 pandemic, has launched a \$50,000 fund in partnership with longtime Iditarod supporter David Pike to create the Pike Dog Wellness First Initiative (PDWFI).

The initiative was created after the Iditarod, along with Pike, began anticipating the potential impact that the COVID-19 pandemic may have on Iditarod mushing kennels due to lost revenue from tourism declines and other economic hardships. The initiative, made possible by Pike’s donation, will supplement musher’s efforts to provide the gold standard of care for their teammates as part of regular wellness visits, vaccines, EKGs and optimum holistic health – all of which will be supported through the PDWFI.

“This race is one of the reasons I fell in love with Alaska,” said David Pike. “It embodies the Alaska way of life; the spirit, grit and dedication to preserving the culture of the sled dog that is so important to continue. I am thrilled with the additional emphasis the Iditarod leadership is placing on dog wellness. We know now is the time for even greater focus on the health of these canine athletes and I’m honored to be a partner in this important initiative.”

The initiative will allocate \$25,000 to both the 2021 and 2022 Iditarod mushers, totaling \$50,000. The first 50 mushers to enter each race are eligible to receive \$500 from the PDWFI to cover veterinary expenses, such as diagnostics, vaccines, deworming and prescribed medications. The Iditarod, through the initiative, will reimburse the musher for the care provided by a licensed veterinarian or licensed veterinarian technician.

“Working with David shows that he, like many others, share our dedication to promoting and providing exemplary dog care,” said Iditarod CEO Rob Urbach. “The Iditarod is a culture of dog people whose passion, purpose and life expertise is dog care. We know that the high standards of care that the Iditarod promotes leads to exceptional health and longevity for sled dogs, and we will continue to share our passion and knowledge of caring for sled dogs to benefit dog owners worldwide.”

The Iditarod is a leader in sled dog care and research, and shares its knowledge so that all dog owners can benefit. Find dog care tips from the Iditarod’s chief veterinarian online at [Iditarod.com/leaders-in-dog-care](http://Iditarod.com/leaders-in-dog-care).

**About the Iditarod**

The Iditarod Trail Committee, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to preserve the rich tradition of the Alaska sled dog and the Iditarod Trail. The organization is charged with coordinating the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, an annual long-distance sled dog race stretching from Anchorage to Nome for nearly a 1,000-mile journey through Alaska over the roughest, most breathtaking terrain in the world. For more information, visit: [www.iditarod.com](http://www.iditarod.com).

**About David Pike and Pike Legal Group, PLLC**

David A. Pike is the managing owner of Pike Legal Group, PLLC, a regional, six-attorney law firm with offices in the Louisville, Kentucky, area. The multi-state practice of the Pike Legal Group, PLLC, is concentrated in real estate, administrative law, telecommunications, land use, zoning, permitting and related litigation. Pike has strong ties to Alaska with volunteer commitments in wildlife preservation, support for public lands and wilderness, improved community planning, and encouraging traditional, winter dog-powered sports. He owns a home in Girdwood, Alaska.

Pike has been supporting Iditarod race teams for 20 years, and has been “King of the Countdown” since 2010, announcing mushers and their sled dog teams as they depart the ceremonial start line in downtown Anchorage the first Saturday of March.

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