

MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

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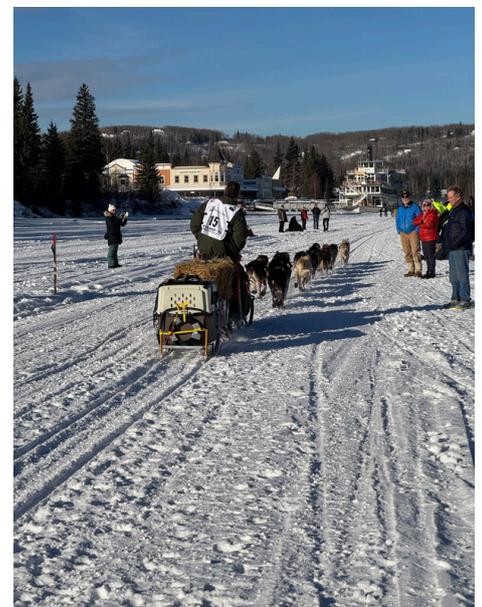
They Are Off! By Linda Fenton

We are officially in the 3rd day of the 2025 Iditarod Sled Dog Race. As you are all well aware, the start was moved to Fairbanks, AK due to the lack of snow along the Southern Route. This new trail adds about 130 extra miles with much of it river travel. With these changes, mushers are having to re-strategize how they will run their race. The dogs don't care - they'll run wherever you want them to. Go Dogs Go!



 Starting Line In Fairbanks

 Jesse Holmes on the Chena River





Boots on the Ground The 2025 Iditarod Winter Educators Conference

The 2025 Iditarod Winter Conference concluded its run on Friday, February 28. It was a week filled with educators sharing and absorbing best practices for weaving the spirit of the Iditarod into classroom adventures. A few highlights were talks from Iditarod finisher and former Insider correspondent, Katie Jo Deeter, along with author and Iditarod finisher, Bridget Watkins. We also heard from artists, vets, and photographer Jeff Schultz. From the Junior Iditarod, we were inspired by Barb Redington and four-time Junior champion, Emily Robinson. The echoes of past Teachers on the Trail, Erin Montgomery and Julianne Westrich, resonated as they shared their enriching experiences and classroom lessons. A highlight of the week was a field trip to the Iditarod Headquarters, where attendees witnessed Vet Checks and visited Matthew Failor's Alaskan Husky Adventures kennel. As we look ahead, don't forget to mark your calendars for next year's conference, set to take place from February 24 to 27, 2026. We hope to see you there!



Mushers Matthew Failor and Dane Baker pose with Conference attendees.



From top to bottom:
Jon & Jona VanZyle
Bus trip
Katie Jo Deeter
Bridget Watkins

Meet A Sled Dog

by Kelly Villar

March ... It is Iditarod time!! This month we meet Ashley Dove and her dog Tiny! Ashley grew up in Anchorage, AK, before moving to Fairbanks, AK in 2020 to pursue her mushing career. She has been working with Crooked Creek Mushing, home of Josh McNeal, Iditarod finisher. When asked about a special dog in their kennel, this is what she said:

"A special dog in our kennel, and one that has been on every race that I've done (and who is training for this upcoming Iditarod!) is Tiny, short for Tiny-Tail. 4 years old and named for his docked and stubby tail, Tiny was one of the first puppies that I helped raise at the kennel. A bit of an underdog, Tiny was a crazy puppy— not very nice to his brothers, loved to jump up and bop you in the face, a little destructive on the line—I spent a lot of extra time with him. Not interested in playing with other dogs, I would walk with him and play with him, just the two of us, while other dogs played with each other. All of that to say that he has developed into an incredible member of the race team. He can run anywhere in the team, most recently growing into a great leader. He has completed every race that he's been in, including last year's Iditarod with Wally Robinson, earning 11th place! He loves people, loves belly rubs, and as you can see— he loves to run, too! The bond that he and I have is special, and I can't wait to share the Iditarod trail with him!"

Although Ashley and her team won't be on the trail this year, we hope to see her back in the future!! To learn more about Ashley, check out [Crooked Creek Mushing](#).





Paws and Get Ready!

Check out some of the exciting plans for the month of March from Maggie Hamilton, 2025 Teacher on the Trail™.



Our Teacher on the Trail, Maggie Hamilton is actually now ON THE TRAIL! In fact she was literally on the trail when she fell off her snowmachine while heading to the checkpoint in the Junior Iditarod. She will be blogging daily from various checkpoints during the race. Follow her adventures [here!](#)



Maggie catches a ride with Musher Gabe Dunham during the Ceremonial Start.



Maggie on a snow machine on her way to Junior checkpoint.



Serum Run Series – Chance Meeting on Norton Sound

by [Terrie Hanke](#)

Judging the ice was safe, Seppala en route to Shaktoolik, decided to cross Norton Sound. Likewise, Henry Ivanoff deemed the ice safe so when he departed Shaktoolik with the serum in his sled, he chose to cross Norton Sound. Neither man knew where the other was.

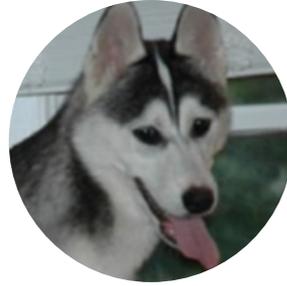
Ivanoff's team encountered a reindeer and managed to get in a huge tangle. Seppala saw the tangled team but decided not to stop to help because time was so important. But Ivanoff recognized the team passing by. He ran after Seppala and yelled, "The Serum! I have it here!"

It was a meeting by chance. On January 31st, Seppala took the handoff and sped back across the sound to Isaac's Point. Sepp's team had traveled 84 miles that day. It was time to feed the dogs, warm the serum and rest at Isaac's Point for a few hours. Seppala's mind was on the children of Nome, especially his 8 year old daughter. Had she contracted diphtheria since he'd left on this mission of mercy?

Learn more about this chance meeting of mushers by reading [Eye on the Trail: Serum Run Stories – Chance Meeting](#)

K9 Journalist Corner by Gypsy

Dear Friends,



The 2025 Iditarod has begun! Musherers and their dog teams are out on the trail, making their way, 1000 miles to Nome! Another major part of the race is the connections it builds with the Alaska Native people in the various communities. Almost every checkpoint represents a community of people who look forward to the excitement of the teams coming through their remote village. Many of these checkpoints can only be reached by plane, boat, snowmobile or dog sled! There are few roads into the interior of Alaska. New people and dogs to see builds great excitement!

Alaska has multiple groups of Alaska Native people groups such as the Yup'ik, Aleut, Alutiiq, Athabascan, Inupiaq, Tlingit, and many more. Their ancestry is illustrated through art and symbols, often to depict character qualities. Each cultural group has a varied background based upon their natural resources that influenced how they lived. In these more modern years, there are many more things in common like the Internet, what kids learn in school, and lifestyles. However, their cultures are still celebrated!

For the November 2024 presidential elections, states were able to create their own "I VOTED" stickers. Notice the Alaskan sticker versus the Virginia sticker, how the symbols represent the cultures or symbols of the two states!

Enjoy celebrating the race because of the dogs, cold, and mushers. Don't forget to celebrate the Alaska Native cultures along the way!

Until next time,
Gypsy



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- **March 16, 2025: Finisher's Banquet**
- **June 24-26, 2025: Iditarod™ EDU Summer Conference in McCall, ID**

Meet the 2026 Teacher on the Trail Finalists

Jackie Denton from Ligonier, IN is a 7th Grade teacher who teaches science through the Indiana Digital Learning School. She not only has been teaching the Iditarod for several years, but has been a volunteer during the race. *"I have taught at elementary, middle and high school levels and have always used the excitement about the race to enhance my curriculum. I also use it school-wide to bring awareness to students who may not have heard of it."*

From Manchester, TN, Kari Lawson teaches 4th Grade English/Language Arts and Social Studies. She first learned about the Iditarod as a school teacher at the Iditarod checkpoint of Skwentna. *"The Iditarod ignites an excitement in learning during a time in the school year when many students are falling into a rut. It motivates them to persevere and rejuvenates their excitement for learning. The IditaRead challenge especially motivates those readers who may have become a bit stagnant through the course of the year. Learning about the Iditarod helps students build background knowledge to the wide world around them."*

Kari Wright is a 3rd Grade teacher from Osage, IA. Kari has been using the Iditarod in the classroom since 2006 when she read an article about the race. *"Whatever the age, it has been a valuable tool, one they look forward to, and one they prepare younger siblings for. Rarely do we find something so unique that makes students want to learn more regardless of the subject or the activity. The Iditarod is that for my classroom of students."*

From L to R: Kari Wright, Kari Lawson, & Jackie Denton
Good luck finalists!



Iditarod[®] EDU

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