

MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

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Get Your Class Involved

By Linda Fenton

Your classroom can be a part of the Iditarod, even if you can't personally be there. One way to be involved is to create centerpieces for the almost 200 tables at the Musher Banquet on February 27. They don't have to be elaborate, but attendees love seeing them. The entry form has been extended from Nov. 8 to Nov. 29. Find more information [here](#).

Another way to be involved is to make dog blankets for our canine athletes. The Iditarod Return Dog Team is in need of 500 fleece dog blankets to be used at checkpoints AND to have on hand for dogs returned to Anchorage during the race. While the dogs are being cared for on their way home from the trail, the Return Dog Team uses these dog blankets as an extra layer of comfort and warmth which the dog athletes can snuggle under when needed. More info [here](#).





Boots on the Ground

by Jane Holmes

The New Burlled Arch for 2025

The arch at the finish line in Nome is going to be brand new this year. And along with it will be a kiosk displaying the history of the arch. I spoke with Race Director Mark Nordman to find out about this historic and monumental task.

Who builds things like a burlled arch? ***Ramey Smyth, 27-time Iditarod competitor with 12 Top 10 finishes, that's who. Ramey is the son of Bud Smyth, a musher in the 1973 race, and Lolly Medley, a competitor in 1974, Ramey said he is honored to have been contacted to build it.***

So, what's the process? ***Ramey has the company Smyth Logwork and Construction in Willow, AK. Currently, he is working with government agencies to find the perfect log. There are things to consider such as length and the presence of burls. He will be responsible for some of the kiosk as well. The arch will be crafted in Willow and delivered to Nome by one of the Iditarod's aviation sponsors.***

When will this happen? ***The goal is for the arch to be delivered to Nome no later than mid-February but as soon as it is ready, it will go. It isn't a stop just for Iditarod race fans. It is an oft visited site all year long in Nome. It stands at St. Joe's church when it isn't spanning Front Street during the race.***

This will be the 3rd burlled arch that has served to mark the finish of the Iditarod for mushers that have persevered through the challenges and many, many miles of the race and the hope is it will last at least another 20 years.

I ran my first Iditarod in 1976. The impressions, the hardships, the colors, the adventure! I would never forget it, but I had to record it. I am not a writer; I don't keep diaries. I paint . . . Having run the race twice and been intimately involved with dogs most of my life, my dedication to Iditarod is not just a passing fancy. I will continue to be involved, to donate what I can, and to try and impart through my paintings the feelings and thrills that this involvement has brought to me.

Jon Van Zyle

Iditarod: The First Ten Years



Anne Patch Winters presents a gold pan award to Jon VanZyle in 1979, as he receives the title of Official Iditarod Artist.

Photo by Frank Flavin

Meet A Sled Dog

by Kelly Villar

This month, we meet Sydnie Bahl! Sydnie is one of the fantastic rookies in this year's Iditarod. Sydnie, born and raised in North Dakota, moved to Alaska in 2021. While working as a physical therapist, Sydnie met Cindy Abbott. Sydnie soon made her way to Vern Halter's Dream a Dream Sled Dog Farm, and the rest is history.

Sydnie continues to race and train with Vern Halter's Dream a Dream Sled Dog Farm, and after visiting Vern Halter's Dog Farm myself in 2019, I know she is working with some of the most incredible canine athletes.

When asked to talk about a dog that holds a special place in her heart, this is what she shared:

"The dog I'd like to highlight is Flue, a 5-year-old from the "fire" litter. His siblings include Flame, Smoke, Kindling, Ember, Ash, and Damper. Flue will be running in lead for our 2025 rookie Iditarod team. Flue holds a special place in my heart because of his focus, drive, and incredible leadership on the trail.

He's finished every race he's participated in and was a key player in all three of my Iditarod qualifying races. Flue is a natural-born leader. Flue's energy knows no bounds! He's always ready to hit the trails and never wants to slow down. Taking rest breaks? Not in Flue's vocabulary!

Flue lives for speed! Whether it's a practice run or a thrilling race, he's in his element when the wind rushes through his fur and the sled glides effortlessly behind him. Flue's heart is as big as his love for running. He thrives on pleasing his human companions and fellow team members, making him a joy to work with. The moment he's on the trail, you can see the sheer joy in his eyes as he races ahead."

To learn more about Sydnie and her road to mushing, visit sydniebahlmusher.com
Stay tuned to Iditarod.com to watch Flue and Sydnie make their way from Anchorage to Nome!



Flue in lead jumping for joy during fall training.

Photo by Sydnie Bahl



Paws and Get Ready!

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



A Classroom Without Walls: The lesson this month focuses on research skills and making connections. Students will research a current musher and compose a friendly and well-crafted letter. This lesson comes with a variety of graphic organizers and is adaptable to any grade level.

More to Discover: Find out more about the original Iditarod Trail, volunteers with the Iditarod Air Force, and how mushers are training in November. Plus you can learn more about how I am using the race in my school and classroom!

CLICK [HERE](#) TO FIND ALL OF MAGGIE'S LESSONS!



Serum Run Series – Diagnosis Diphtheria!

by [Terrie Hanke](#)

After the Alameda, the final supply ship of the season, pulled anchor and headed to warmer waters, Dr. Curtis Welch saw more sore throats than usual in Nome. Tonsillitis was his initial diagnosis. But then, late in December, one of the children with tonsillitis died. The native parents didn't allow Welch to do an examination.

A few days later he admitted a three year old boy to the hospital who was suffering from a sore throat, swollen glands, fever and fatigue. Not long after being admitted, Dr. Welch observed grayish lesions in the boy's throat. These lesions were typical of diphtheria, a disease that was extremely contagious and preyed on children ages one thru ten.

Upon realizing that he was dealing with a disease that could take the lives of all the children in the community. There was no time to waste. He contacted Nome Mayor, George Maynard, and asked him to call a meeting of the town council.

The council members agreed a total quarantine was absolutely necessary to curb the spread of the deadly disease. They acted quickly, imposing a lockdown - every school, church, movie house and lodge was ordered to close.

When would antitoxin be located and how would it get to Nome in time to save the children? The entire Eye on the Trail story "Diagnosis Diphtheria" can be found at this [link](#).

Iditarod Education

Iditarod Education Winter Conference

At the Lakefront Hotel

Feb. 25 – Feb. 28, 2025 in Anchorage, Alaska

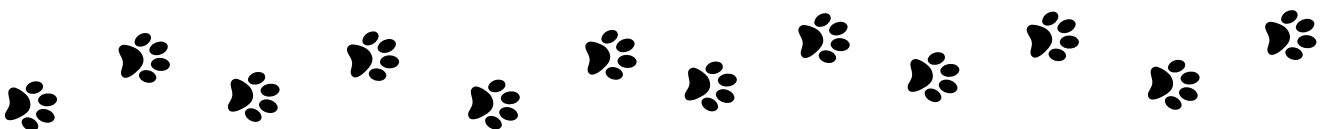
Whether you are a “veteran” or “rookie” Iditarod educator, or just want to include an adventure learning project in your classroom, this conference will be one to remember. Walk away with full lessons and ideas to adapt for your own students and classrooms back home. Learn how to use the tools offered through the Iditarod, Iditarod EDU and the many programs we offer during the school year. You will hear from past Teachers on the Trail™, this year’s Teacher on the Trail™ finalists and some special guest presenters that include:

- Maggie Hamilton – 2025 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™
- Jeff Schultz – former Iditarod photographer
- Jon Van Zyle – Official Iditarod artist
- Barb Redington – Junior Iditarod board member
- Emily Robinson – 3x defending Junior Iditarod champion and musher
- PLUS MORE TO COME!

It is truly an experience that will equip you like no other professional development training. Interact with Iditarod mushers, staff, dogs, legends, fans, and other educators. Experience Iditarod pre-race veterinary checks first hand and visit Matthew Failor’s “Alaskan Husky Adventures” kennel. Participate in the Musher Meet and Greet and drawing banquet on February 27. Gain access to the start chute at the Ceremonial Start in downtown Anchorage, and truly become a part of “The Last Great Race.” Go a step farther and volunteer for the race while you are here!

Remember – Educators in Alaska are able to register for single days at a special rate. Please use your Alaska school district email when you register and/or include your school name.

[Get more information and registration materials here!](#)



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Nov. 13, 2024: Trail Mail Design Ideas
- Nov. 29, 2024: Centerpiece Ideas
- Dec. 2, 2024: 2026 TEACHER ON THE TRAIL™ APPLICATIONS Due
- Jan. 11, 2025: Dog Blankets in Wasilla
- Feb 18, 2025: Centerpieces Due in Anchorage
- Feb. 25-28, 2025: Iditarod™ EDU Winter Conference
- March 1, 2025: Ceremonial Start
- March 2, 2025: Start of 2025 Iditarod™
- June 24-26, 2025: Iditarod™ EDU Summer Conference in McCall, ID

Annual Iditarod Education Department Trail Mail Design Contest

Attention 5th – 12th Grade Artists, Teachers, & Parents:
It's time again for our student art contest
to create the 2025 Iditarod Trail Mail envelope design.

Get more information here:

[Trail Mail Design Contest](#)



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