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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Veteran musher Jessie Holmes wins Alaska Air Transit Spirit of Iditarod Award**

**Anchorage, Alaska** – Veteran musher Jessie Holmes (bib #15), of Odenville, Alabama was the first musher to reach the Grayling 2 (the second pass through Grayling) checkpoint at 2:35 p.m. today with 14 dogs, winning the Alaska Air Transit Spirit of Iditarod Award.

First presented in 2019 and given to the first musher to reach the McGrath checkpoint, this award will now be given to the first musher to reach the Grayling 2 checkpoint for the 2025 Iditarod due to the [route change](#). The Grayling community has strong ties to the Iditarod and is excited to present special gifts of Beaver fur musher's mitts with beadwork on moose hide, which are handmade by Loretta Maillelle who was raised in Grayling. Loretta's elder father, Joseph Maillelle, Sr. of Grayling will be presenting these handmade mitts as well as a beaver fur hat made by Rosalie Egrass of McGrath on behalf of Alaska Air Transit.

"It is an honor to have Joseph Maillelle Sr. greeting the first musher, as he shares the tradition of the Iditarod dating back to when he checked in the very first team into Grayling over 50 years ago during the first Iditarod!" says Josie Owen, owner of Alaska Air Transit.

"We are honored to present The Spirit of Iditarod Award, and this year especially resonates for us. All the racers and volunteers have had to overcome last minute changes and challenges. Regardless, the same attitude and excitement is present, communities pulling together to make things happen. That is the true Spirit of Iditarod! A special Thank you to the residents of McGrath for creating our beautiful Mitts and Hat for the first Musher!" says Alaska Air Transit Station Manager, Colette Goodman.

This is Alaska Air Transit's seventh year sponsoring the Iditarod and seventh year presenting the Spirit of Iditarod Award. Alaska Air Transit offers crucial flight support statewide via air charter and provides scheduled service to the Upper Kuskokwim communities of Nikolai, McGrath, Takotna and Tatalina as well as the Prince William Sound communities of Tatitlek and Chenega.

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Iditarod Trail Committee  
2100 South Knik-Goose Bay Road • Wasilla, Alaska 99654  
907.376.5155 • [www.iditarod.com](http://www.iditarod.com)

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**Media contact:**

Shannon Noonan  
Iditarod Trail Committee  
[shannon.noonan@iditarod.com](mailto:shannon.noonan@iditarod.com)