



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Inaugural Expedition Team Continues Support for Rookie Iditarod Mushers**

**Wasilla, Alaska** – The Iditarod Trail Committee is honored and deeply grateful to announce the continued support of Kjell Inge Røkke, Thomas Wærner, and their team for the 2027 Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

As members of the inaugural [Expedition Musher Class](#) in the 2026 Iditarod, Røkke and Wærner embraced the spirit, challenge, and adventure of The Last Great Race®. Their passion for the sport and commitment to its future has already made a significant impact on the Iditarod community. In 2026, Røkke generously donated an amount equal to 50% of every musher's entry fee, providing meaningful support to the entire field of competitors. Building upon that commitment, Kjell Inge, Thomas, and their team are now making a direct investment in the next generation of mushers.

Through their generous support, all rookie Iditarod mushers signing up for the 2027 Iditarod will receive assistance covering 80% of their race entry fee, helping reduce financial barriers and making participation in this iconic event more accessible to aspiring competitors.

The announcement comes at a fitting time, as the Iditarod community prepares to gather this Saturday, June 27, for the annual Musher Sign-Up Picnic at Iditarod Headquarters in Wasilla. The event marks the official kickoff of the journey to the 2027 Iditarod and brings together returning veterans, rookies, volunteers, sponsors, and supporters who share a passion for preserving Alaska's rich mushing heritage. For those who have met the necessary criteria, completed the [qualifying races](#) and are considering their first Iditarod, this commitment represents an incredible opportunity to take the next step toward the starting line.

"Kjell Inge, Thomas, and their team have demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to the future of mushing," said the Iditarod Trail Committee. "Their generosity will help aspiring mushers take the next step toward achieving a lifelong dream while preserving and promoting the traditions, values, and cultural significance of mushing in Alaska. We cannot thank them enough for their belief in the Iditarod and their investment in the next generation of competitors."

The Iditarod has long been more than a race. It is a living celebration of Alaska's history, the extraordinary bond between musher and sled dog, and the enduring traditions of mushing that have shaped communities across the North for generations. The future of this sport depends on encouraging and

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supporting new mushers as they pursue the dream of reaching the Iditarod starting line and, ultimately, the burled arch in Nome.

“We appreciate Mr. Røkke’s continued support of the Iditarod and his passion for The Last Great Race on Earth®. In today’s increasingly digital world, it is exciting to see someone of Røkke’s prominence encouraging people to get outdoors and build strong bonds with their dogs,” said Iditarod Official Finisher’s Club (IOFC) President and 13 time Iditarod finisher, Matthew Failor. “His generous financial support will create opportunities for more young mushers to pursue ambitious goals, build valuable life skills and provide their dogs the adventure of a lifetime in Alaska’s wilderness. We look forward to welcoming many more mushers into the Iditarod Official Finishers Club, thanks to Mr. Røkke.”

Support like this strengthens not only the race itself but the broader mushing community. By helping rookie mushers begin their Iditarod journey, Røkke and Wærner are ensuring that the stories, traditions, and spirit of the Iditarod continue for generations to come.

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**About the Iditarod**

The Iditarod Trail Committee is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the heritage of Alaska’s sled dogs and the historic Iditarod Trail. Each year, the Committee organizes the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, a 1,000-mile competition from Anchorage to Nome that challenges mushers and their teams to navigate Alaska’s extreme terrain and unpredictable conditions. Recognized internationally for its endurance and tradition, the Iditarod showcases the skill, resilience, and spirit of Alaska’s sled dog culture. For more information, visit [www.iditarod.com](http://www.iditarod.com).