

2009-10 PARENT HANDBOOK updated September 2009

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

AJNL Hotline 343-6800

Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage 276-7609

Kincaid Outdoor Center 343-6397

Kincaid Weather 248-8929

Russian Jack Springs Chalet 343-6992

INTRODUCTION

The Anchorage Junior Nordic League provides an opportunity for children to enjoy the Anchorage winter while learning the sport of cross country skiing. Children ages 6 through 14 of all abilities are welcome to join and learn a sport they can pursue for a lifetime. The emphasis is on having fun and learning proper technique rather than competition. AJNL is affiliated with the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage, and is governed by a committee of NSAA that is made up of parent volunteers. It is run by a director who oversees the coaching staff. Parents assist in the operation of the league and all parents are encouraged to participate.

ELIGIBILITY

AJNL is open to all children ages 6 through 14. Children MUST be 6 before participating in AJNL. It is our experience that children younger than 6 are not ready to go out with a group without their parents on cold dark nights. As a consequence they may have a bad experience and also cause the rest of the group to have a bad time.

PRACTICE SCHEDULE

The ski season is divided into 2 sessions of 8 weeks each. Session I begins in mid-November and continues through early January. Session II begins one week later and ends the first week of March (just before spring break for the school district). Skiers may register for one or both sessions.

2009 – 2010 Schedule:

Session 1: November 9, 2009 - January 2, 2010

Session 2: January 11, 2010 - March 6, 2010

Each skier attends practice three times a week—twice on weekdays from 6:30-7:30p.m. and Saturday from 10:15 - 11:45 a.m. (Kincaid and Russian Jack) and 10 – 11:30 (Hillside). Saturday is a day for all skiers. The weekday sessions are generally devoted to instruction and games while Saturdays are reserved for tours and other fun activities. Attendance is not mandatory.

We start skiing promptly at 6:30 p.m. Plan to arrive 15 minutes early so that your skiers can find their groups, wax their skis and receive any necessary instructions before practice begins. Since coaches and groups leave the chalet promptly at the start of practice, skiers arriving late will not be able to find their group without assistance from their parents. It is the responsibility of the parent to find the proper group if late. AJNL will not be responsible for skiers who arrive late for practice. On occasions when you know you will be late it is best to miss a practice. If a child is late they cannot be allowed to ski alone or to search for the group.

During periods when skiers are learning classical technique, waxing of skis will be necessary. Jr. Nordic supplies the kick wax and the coach will determine the proper wax to use before the start of practice. Skiers should come to practice with skis cleaned of old wax, or come early so that they can clean their skis before practice.

EQUIPMENT CHECK-OUT (JACKETS AND SKIS)

All registered skiers need to pick up a Junior Nordic jacket, hat and skis, if they choose to rent skis. You must come to Kincaid on one of these days to get skis, a jacket and hat.

Equipment check out for Session # 1 will take place:

Thursday, November 5, 6:30- 8:00 p.m., Kincaid Chalet or

Saturday, November 7, 10:30 –11:30 a.m., Kincaid Chalet

Equipment check out for Session # 2 will take place:

Thursday, January 7, 2009, 6:30- 8:00 p.m., Kincaid Chalet or

Saturday, January 9, 10:30 –11:30 a.m., Kincaid Chalet

ORIENTATION

All parents must attend an orientation meeting on the first day of practice. For session one, meetings will be held November 9 (Kincaid M/W, Hillside M/W and Russian Jack groups), Nov. 10 (Kincaid T/Th and Hillside T/Th group) at 6:30 p.m. at the venue where your child will be skiing. If there is snow, the kids will be skiing; if there is not snow, we still have practice and the kids will run or hike with the coaches and play games. We still have fun, getting in shape for skiing!

If you start during session two, the parent meeting will be the first night that your child has practice, at the venue where your child is skiing. This will be Monday, Jan. 11 or Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2010 at 6:30 p.m.

COMMUNICATIONS

The HOTLINE tells you where practice will be and also provides timely information on upcoming special events, etc. The message on the answering machine is generally revised for week of practice session, but may be changed daily, normally by 3 pm. However, during periods of weather conditions listed below the HOTLINE may be updated until as late as 5:30 pm. Check the HOTLINE before you leave for practice each evening and on Saturdays. The HOTLINE is the final word on the location of practice. Since weather and trail conditions can change rapidly, the use of the HOTLINE provides the necessary flexibility to have practice at the best location.

THE HOTLINE NUMBER IS 343-6800.

We also communicate with families by EMAIL. We keep our email list for AJNL purposes only, and send the emails so that the list is not available to all recipients. This is a great tool for us to keep families informed, so please provide your email address when you register. If you are not receiving emails, it may be that they are not making it through your spam filter.

WEATHER

Practice normally takes place as scheduled regardless of weather conditions. However, practice may be cancelled due to the following conditions: heavy snowfall, rain, "boiler plate" (sheet of ice) conditions, high winds, and temperature below minus 5 degrees F. If there is no snow, as is sometimes the case at the start of Session I, skiers will have an alternative activity such as hiking with poles or playing games. Call the HOTLINE for the latest information.

PRACTICE LOCATIONS

(1) The Hillside group will meet at Trailside Elementary School or behind Service High School at the stadium, and ski at the Hillside ski area. Location of Saturday practice may change, so be sure to check the HOTLINE.

(2) The Kincaid group will meet at Kincaid Park Chalet. Location of Saturday practice may change, so be sure to check the HOTLINE.

(3) The Russian Jack Springs group will meet at RJS Chalet. Location of Saturday practice may change, so be sure to check the HOTLINE.

Skiers will remain with their weekday practice group for the entire session for which they are registered.

WHAT TO BRING TO PRACTICE

Children are not allowed to ski without adequate protection for the weather. This includes hat, mittens or gloves, and AJNL jacket. However, skiing is a strenuous activity so skiers should not overdress. All skiers must be well fed and should take their medications before practice or as prescribed. A water bottle is required for Wolverines and Hawks and all children with asthma. It is also highly recommended that Otters and Polar Cubs carry water bottles.

CURRICULUM

AJNL skiers except Polar Cubs learn both classical (diagonal) and skate skiing, normally in 2 week intervals. Polar Cubs learn to classical ski only. Skiers learn proper care and handling of equipment, trail etiquette, good sportsmanship and how to act responsibly in the outdoors. A typical practice session will include a warm-up period, a lesson in technique, and a fun activity. Activities for younger skiers emphasize fun on skis, balance, strength and coordination.

All skiers are assigned to one of 4 skill groups based upon ability level. The skill groups are in turn divided into smaller groups of between 5 and 8 skiers each. Advancement to the next higher group is determined by the coaching staff and occurs when the skier has:

- (1) mastered all the techniques taught at his or her current group level,
- (2) demonstrated a responsibility level consistent with promotion,
- (3) demonstrated understanding of etiquette and ski rules consistent with promotion, and
- (4) demonstrated the physical stamina necessary for the next higher group.

SKILL GROUPS

POLAR CUBS

Younger beginners learning to feel comfortable on skis, basic diagonal (classical) technique, safety and etiquette.

OTTERS

More advanced beginner skiers learning skate skiing and mastering classical technique, along with safety skills and etiquette.

WOLVERINES

Intermediate skiers learning to put together the techniques of classical and skate skiing to move fast and effortlessly along the trail. Wolverines have more independence on skis, emphasizing group cohesiveness, etiquette and physical stamina.

HAWKS

The most accomplished skiers, learning advanced diagonal and skate techniques as well as racing techniques and strategy. Hawks are the elite, and as such wear the distinctive Hawks jacket. They must demonstrate discipline, cooperation, and desire.

FEES

AJNL is self-supporting. For NSAA members, the fee is \$140.00 per child per session, or \$270.00 for both sessions, if the skier is registered by November 3, 2009. NOTE: to receive this break, you must register and pay by November 3, 2009. Payment is due at the time of registration, and can be made by credit card through online registration. You may also mail in a check after registering online if you prefer. For more information on fees, click on the "Junior Nordic Info" link at this website.

The primary expense covered by the fee is paying for the coaches. In addition, the fee covers the lease of a league jacket, a facilities user fee paid to the Municipality, insurance, replacement of equipment, and for first time AJNL skiers, a wool hat. Scholarships are available for families unable to afford the fee. Applicants for scholarship should submit a letter to the Jr Nordic Committee, c/o NSAA. Scholarships are administered by the Committee.

REFUND POLICY

Cancellation must be put in writing and mailed to:

AJNL / NSAA

203 W. 15th, # 204

Anchorage, AK 99501

Or emailed to: nsaa@alaska.net

To receive a refund, your letter of cancellation must be postmarked or emailed by the following times:

- (a) Cancellation postmarked up to two weeks prior to opening day of Session #1 or #2: all fees paid

MINUS a \$15 processing fee

(b) Cancellations postmarked up to one week prior to opening day of Session #1 or #2: 50% of fees paid

(c) Cancellations after one week prior to opening day: no refund.

This refund policy will also apply to ski rentals.

NSAA MEMBERSHIP

Our skiers are not required to be members of NSAA, but NSAA members receive discounts on Junior Nordic fees. We encourage all Junior Nordic families to join and support NSAA because NSAA maintains and grooms the ski trails of Hillside and Kincaid Parks. Junior Nordic is a heavy user of the trails and is grateful to NSAA for doing such a superb job summer and winter maintaining and grooming them. You can join NSAA as a family or make your child an NSAA member at the same time that you sign up for Junior Nordic (by clicking on "Add Programs" button.) Visit the NSAA website at www.anchoragenordicski.com or click on the NSAA Ski Bear when you are registering for Junior Nordic.

OTHER EXPENSES

Expenses not covered by the program fee include skis, boots, poles, water bottles, replacement AJNL hats (\$25). In addition, all skiers must have warm protective clothing to keep them both safe and happy when it is particularly cold.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

AJNL is a parent volunteer organization and only works if parents are willing to pitch in and help on occasion. As an example, every parent is expected to volunteer as a parent helper at least two times during each Session. The Parent Helpers accompany a group of skiers during practice to assist the coach in getting the group organized and out the door at the start of practice, to help keep the group together and to take cold or tired skiers back to the chalet. It is not necessary for the parent to be a good skier to be a Parent Helper. The Parent Helper gets a good workout as well. Parent Helpers NEVER ski in the same group as their own child. See site directors or head coaches before practice to volunteer as a parent helper. Parent volunteers can also help inside at the venues, to get skiers organized and out the door or to clean up after the session, or before the season starts, to clean and inventory equipment or help at equipment pick-up. We expect all parents to assist at one or more various assignments during the session. There are a number of volunteer categories on the registration form to choose from. If parents are unable to volunteer, we ask for a \$20 donation.

EQUIPMENT

The most important rule about equipment is MARK ALL YOUR GEAR. Skis and poles can be marked by putting masking tape with your child's name onto the skis and poles. Kids can and do mix up equipment and it is much easier to sort it out (and relocate YOUR equipment) if it has a name on it. It is amazing how big the Lost and Found barrel is at the Kincaid Outdoor Center.

Skiers need skis, boots, and poles (as well as proper clothing—see next section)

JUNIOR NORDIC JACKETS are provided at no cost to the skier. The jackets are on loan and must be returned at the end of the session. These are wind-jackets with a big front pocket.

RENTAL SKIS are available on a limited, first come, first serve basis, through AJNL for a \$20.00 fee per Session. If you choose to rent, you must still provide your skier with boots and poles. The boots must match the bindings on the rental skis which are the NNN bindings. Any salesperson can steer you toward the correct boot. Rental skis are combination skis—they work for both diagonal and skate skiing, but if you want high performance skis for an advanced skier they may not be appropriate.

Skis may be kept for an extra month at the end of Session 2 for an additional \$10.00.

To insure the return of equipment, we require a deposit of either a check or a credit card number when the equipment is checked out. The checks will be held until the end of the season and returned to the skier when the jackets and skis are returned. Failure to return equipment at the end of the session will result in the cashing of the deposit check or a charge to the credit card for the unreturned equipment. Jackets and skis must be returned clean and in good condition.

Skis need to be the right length. If you are purchasing skis, the salesperson can help you to pick the right length. If you rent Jr. Nordic skis, we will help to pick the right length of skis. Skis come in an array of styles. Do NOT get the NO WAX variety (fish scales on the bottom) since they will not work when your child starts to skate and they are SLOW for learning skiers. The best bet is a combination ski which is designed for both diagonal stride and skate techniques. If you already own waxless skis, it will be harder for your child to learn to skate ski when he or she becomes an Otter. It is recommended you rent AJNL skis. Skis for the smallest skiers can be a problem, particularly if the boots do not fit the skis well. There is nothing that drains the enthusiasm faster than repeatedly having to put skis on after they have slipped from the bindings. (Especially for the parent who gets this job.) Please be sure BEFORE you bring your child to ski that the boots fit and stand in the bindings.

BOOTS must match the BINDINGS. AJNL skis have the NEW NORDIC NORM (NNN) bindings. Boots are specialized like skis, but a combination boot, which is designed to work for both the traditional diagonal and the skate techniques, is the best value. Remember to get boots that have a little extra room to accommodate wool socks and some foot growth during the season. Feet that are squeezed into boots that are too small are often COLD feet.

POLE length ideally varies with the technique. If your child is a beginner in Polar Cubs, pole should come just above the armpits. A good compromise for Otters and Wolverine is a pole that comes almost to the child's chin. For Hawks, skating poles should come up to the mouth when standing on flat feet. And diagonal (classic) poles should come up just above the bottom of the arm pits.

WHAT TO WEAR

DRESS REQUIREMENTS

The key to a happy skier is being warm enough for conditions, but not so bundled up as to prevent movement. The secret is to make sure you have the following LAYERING system:

VENTILATION—closest to the skin to allow perspiration to move away from the skin. Breathable polypropylene or other synthetic long underwear provides the ventilation layer. NO COTTON!

INSULATION—to trap the warmth generated by your body and keep you warm. Fleece, wool, or other synthetic material provides the insulation layer

PROTECTION—the outer layer that protects you from wind and wet. AJNL jacket, a pullover type shell, provides the protection layer. Wind pants are often necessary during periods of wind or extreme cold.

HEADS AND HANDS - Wearing a hat is a must. NO HAT, NO PRACTICE! It does not have to be an AJNL hat, but your child must have a hat with them. For hands, mittens work much better than gloves. On cold days a neck warmer keeps both the neck and the lower face warm and is required for children with asthma. A neck warmer can easily be carried in the pocket of the Jr Nordic jacket.

NO PART OF THE LAYERING SYSTEM SHOULD INCLUDE ANY COTTON CLOTHING. COTTON IS THE WORST MATERIAL FOR WARMTH AND PROTECTION.

You'll need to vary the insulation layer based on the temperature, keeping in mind that skiers warm up when they are moving but cool off when they are not. Keeping the extremities warm is the biggest challenge when it is cold. Wool socks over polypro socks keeps the feet warm. Wool socks with a hole cut in the toe to put over the boots or boot covers are essential during cold weather.

If your child forgets his/her hat, the site director will provide one from lost and found for use only on that day. Coaches are sensitive to conditions and may shorten practice or move indoors on occasion. However, if a skier is properly dressed there is no reason not to be comfortable skiing at a temperature of zero or below.

Remember to MARK ALL YOUR CLOTHES, SKI BOOTS, POLES AND SKIS. Write your name on a piece of tape and tape it right on to the skis and poles. PUT YOUR CHILD'S NAME IN YOUR JR NORDIC HAT!

SAFETY

There are risks inherent in any outdoor activity like cross country skiing and although every effort is made to prevent accidents, minor scrapes and bumps do occur from time to time. The coaches are equipped with medical kits. Each year the coaches attend a first aid training session. Parents are responsible for making sure their children know and follow the rules to prevent injury to themselves and others. The most important rules that parents should discuss with their children are:

- (1) Obey the coach and parent helpers
- (2) Never ski alone. If you are in front of the group and come to an intersection, always stop and wait for the coach.
- (3) Never leave your group without permission.
- (4) Use your equipment properly—especially poles (people can be seriously injured by the sharp points of ski poles.) Keep poles pointed at the ground and do not point with poles or use them for games like tripping others.
- (5) Pay attention to trail signs and be sure that you are going in the correct direction of travel if the trail is marked as "one way."
- (6) Avoid moose encounters—Moose are a common sight on the trail, particularly at Kincaid Park and the "burn" area at Hillside. Usually moose mind their own business, but they can be unpredictable. Never pass a moose on the trail, get between a mother and her calf, throw anything at a moose, yell at it or walk or ski toward it. If a moose moves towards you, get behind a tree or anywhere you are out of sight.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Monthly committee meetings are scheduled during the winter. All parents are invited to attend.

DISCIPLINE

The inherent dangers involved in cross country skiing combined with the large size of AJNL require that children promptly obey the rules established by the coaches and parent helpers. Children who are unable to obey the rules pose a threat to the safety of others as well as themselves and put an unfair burden on the coaches, other children, and parents.

Children who are unable to follow the rules established by the coaches will not be allowed to attend practice. Normally, the following progressive procedures will apply:

- (1) First infraction—Formal warning to skier
- (2) Second infraction—Meeting between coach, child, and parent
- (3) Third infraction—Suspension for 2 weeks
- (4) Fourth infraction—Suspension from the program

At the discretion of the board, certain serious infractions (such as fighting or situations involving risks of physical harm) may result in deviation from this progressive discipline policy, up to and including immediate suspension.

COMPETITION AND RACING

Because the philosophy of AJNL is to encourage children to learn and enjoy cross country skiing as a lifetime activity, competition and racing are not the most important part of the program. Skiers move at their own pace through the skill groups and are encouraged to do their best.

The AJNL offers several fun activities each season. These often include an orienteering event, the Ski-4-Kids fun day and an obstacle race course.

AJNL also sponsors a race team open to all Jr. Nordic children. The race team attends the Besh Cup races in the Anchorage area and may travel to Homer/Soldotna and the Fairbanks area. The AJNL race team has several coaches who attend each race, help the kids wax their skis, get the kids warmed up and at to the start area according to their start times. Coaches also join parents in cheering the racers on during the race. The Besh Cup races are designed for skiers of all skill and competitive levels. Even children as young as 6 can join in short races tailored to their ability level. Parents can also sign up for the races and race at their age level. All skiers are winners.

COACHES

The Program Director oversees the program and interacts with site directors, head coaches, coaching staff, children in the program, the parents of the children and Parks & Rec. staff. Site directors are responsible for the day-to-day responsibilities for the M/W or T/Th groups at Kincaid, Hillside and Russian Jack (Russian Jack only meets on M/W). Site Directors update the HOTLINE, organize the cookie tour, and touch base with the head coaches. There are 4 head coaches at each site for M/W and T/Th practices: a Polar Cub head coach, an Otter head coach, a Wolverine head coach and a Hawk head coach. Head coaches are responsible for daily curriculum and putting children into sub-groups of 5 to 8 children. Each sub-group has one coach who takes the kids out and teaches technique and fun ways to ski.

Get to know your child's coach and head coach and site director. Communicate with them any concerns you may have.

MEDICAL

If your child has a medical condition that may need to be treated out on the trails (asthma, food allergies....) let the head coach and your child's coach know. This is very important and helps avoid a crisis situation. This information should be included in your child's registration and we try to be sure that the coaches know about any medical information provided, but you should talk to your child's coach directly.