

LOCALNEWS

A family who skis together, stays together

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

Since their dating years, cross country skiing has been a way for local resi-

dents Anthony and Teresa Stone to enjoy the outdoors in the winter and spend time together. “For us, we look forward to and plan our ski trips and

races much like how others plan for their deer season,” Teresa said. “It is something we look forward to all year long.”

The pair passed their love of the sport to their daughter, Carolann, who joined her parents on skis when she was about one month old carried in a front pack beneath their anoraks, said Anthony, a doctor at Rainy Lake Medical Center.

Fast forward 15 years: The Stone family is still skiing both for fun and competition. The trio on Feb. 22 completed in the American Birkebeiner, known as the Birkie, the largest and one of the longest cross country ski races in North America.

The two premier events are the 54-kilometer (34 miles) classic and the 50-kilometer (31 miles) freestyle race from Cable to Hayward, Wis. Each year, about 10,000 skiers compete in the Birkie, along with the 26-kilometer Korteloppet and 12-kilometer Prince Hakkon events, Anthony said. He competed in



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Stone family from left: Carolann, Anthony and Teresa, prepare to compete in the Korteloppet and American Birkenbeiner ski races in Cable, Wis. Feb. 22.

the 50-kilometer race and Teresa and Carolann competed in the Korteloppet.

“Our first Birkie experience was skiing in the half-marathon, the Korteloppet, in 2005,” Teresa said. “We loved it and wanted more, so we entered in the full marathon, the American Birkebeiner, the next year and every year since. As Carolann is not old enough to ski the full Birkie – you need to be 18 years old to ski the Birkie, and 13 to ski the Korteloppet – for the last three years, Anthony and I have been alternating between the Birkie and the Korteloppet.”

Teresa said this year’s Birkie race was Anthony’s seventh, Carolann’s third Korteloppet, and she will compete in her seventh Birkie next year.

Although Anthony has competed in seven of the

grueling races, he said this year’s event was especially challenging.

“Northern Wisconsin received 12-15 inches of snow on Thursday, right before the race,” he said. “While the trail groomers did a great job in preparing the trail for the skiers, it is impossible to groom that much new snow and have it set up as a firm trail for 10,000 skiers. By the time the first thousand or so skiers had skied on the trail, it pretty much deteriorated into 8 inches of mashed potatoes. Skiing up the hills was like trying to ski up a sand dune.”

Still, he said, the event is amazing.

“The energy at the start really carries you along,” he said. “After the first 20-kilometers or so, the crowd has thinned, and you are on your own. There

are always crowds along the many parts of the trail, cheering, offering encouragement, and ringing bells.”

Carolann said the family tradition is all for fun.

“We really aren’t competitive racers, but we still strive to do our best,” she said. “I am really lucky because I swim for the Broncos in the fall, so I get in pretty good shape from that. Once the snows come, we try to ski as much as possible. This winter was really tough because the cold temperatures didn’t let us ski as much as we usually do.”

In addition to the Birkie, the family has since 2008, competed in the Noque- manon Ski Marathon in Marquette, Mich.; the Pepsi Challenge at Giants Ridge in Biwabik; and a few other local races.

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