

September 26, 2005

Greetings to Iditarod Educators, Students and Race Fans,

Along with the calendar, cooler temperatures, shorter days and changing leaf color indicate that fall has arrived. By now activities of summer are fond memories while school, sports and other activities demand our full attention. Speaking of summer activities, the quilt constructed by the attendees of the summer conference is on its way to Florida. By the time it arrives in Anchorage for the start of Iditarod 2006, it will have covered (oops - no pun intended) thousands of miles and visited 20 classrooms. If you're interested in constructing a "learning quilt" as a class project, there are simple directions posted along with the October lessons.

Currently, there are 69 entries for Iditarod 2006. Of that number, 19 are from the lower 48 and six are from Wisconsin. In early July, I had the opportunity to meet the mushers of Team Cortte from Quietwood Kennel in Tomahawk, Wisconsin. Quietwood Kennel has two teams entered in Iditarod 2006, Ron Cortte and Chad Schouweiller. In the coming months, without giving away any training secrets, I plan to share training regimen and preparations Team Cortte and the other Wisconsin mushers are involved in.

Given the extraordinary warm temperatures we've had in the Badger state recently, training has been pretty low key. Since August 22nd, Team Cortte has been running 12 to 14 dog teams at a slow pace behind the 4-wheeler for 3 or 4 miles. Anything above sixty degrees is too warm for running dogs. To find cooler weather for training their 50 dogs, they begin at 3:30 am and finish up around 7:00 am. When the temperature drops, they will raise the miles to 10 for a week or two then 15, then 20. At this time it's very important for the yearlings and younger dogs to get lots of hook-ups. They are also focusing on leader work. Ron and Chad hope to have every dog in the team trained to lead. Some will be slower, some will be faster and some will be better command leaders but they'll all be trained for the job.

Equipment wise, Team Cortte has acquired 4000, yes that's right - 4000 booties. They are stocked up on food, some specifically for training, some for racing. Their harnesses are on order. Ron has completed one sled made of aircraft aluminum. This will be his training sled. Ron says it looks nice

but it remains to be seen how it handles and how tough it is. The second sled, currently under construction, will be made of carbon fiber shafts. The carbon fiber is very light and very tough. This is what Martin Buser is using.

Recently, Team Cortte hosted Kinship kids and nursing home residents for mushing demonstrations at Quietwood. Ron set up a wall tent as a mock Iditarod checkpoint, showed slides of previous Iditarod races and then hooked up dogs. Kids and elders were thrilled with the experience. Thank you Team Cortte for sharing your love of mushing with your community and giving your guests the best day of their recent lives. Stay tuned each month for updates from Quietwood as well as the other Wisconsin Iditarod teams.



Terrie with Ron Cortte and Chad Schouweiller

Lessons posted for October include Idit-Aerobics and Homonyms or Homophones. Following you'll find a brief explanation of each activity. Specific details, worksheets and standards can be found with each lesson.

Idit-Aerobics: There are numerous versions of Idit-Aerobics out there. A couple of organizations in Nome use Idita-WALK and Idita-SWIM as fund raising activities at race time each year. The general idea is that a person commits to doing 1049 minutes of aerobics in a specific period of time - perhaps 6 weeks. There are 35 thirty-minute segments in 1049 miles. The aerobic activity can vary and include walking, running, biking, swimming, skiing, skating, rowing, anything that raises heart rate and is continued for at least 20 minutes. I recently suggested this activity to a person who had

just begun an aerobic exercise program but was somewhat bored. She is now keeping track of the number of times she covers the distance from Anchorage to Nome before Iditarod 2006 begins. It's fun to ask her which checkpoint she's currently at and how many times she's made it to Nome. She's even doing research on the checkpoints along the trail to learn about the history and culture of the village and people who live there.

Homophones or Homonyms: Homophones or homonyms confuse students even at the senior high level. It seems that proper use of to, too & two; your & you're; there, they're & their and other homonyms needs to be continually reinforced. Along with the lesson plan, you'll find a couple of worksheets with Iditarod based homophone activities. The students know a great deal about Iditarod and can use their knowledge to practice the proper use of homonyms.

Eight Traits of Iditarod: The second trait of Iditarod is "D" for diligence. Throughout the race, mushers exemplify thorough, persistent and hard-working effort in doing almost everything. Lew Friedman shares a story about Lavon Barve from Iditarod 1991 that demonstrates diligence. Barve began the race as one of the favorites but as it turned out he was lucky to survive and finish the race. During the race, Barve's dogs went over an embankment. After getting the dogs back up the embankment, he left them to walk 20 or 30 feet ahead to locate the trail. The wind was howling at about 60 miles an hour and snow blew in. When he returned he couldn't find his team. There wasn't much visibility, only 12 to 15 feet. He walked for 18 hours without shelter, food or water in the snow and wind searching for his team. Finally he realized it didn't do any good to keep looking. He began walking toward a shelter cabin and was completely void of energy when some snowmachiners found him. After eating a good meal and warming himself, he found his dogs and completed his journey to Nome finishing seventeenth. Lavon's painstaking, persistent and hardworking effort allowed him to surprisingly finish in the money. Friedman's book, Iditarod Classics published by Epicenter Press, contains many great stories as told by the mushers themselves.

Happy Trails to all,
Terrie