

Northwoods Humane Society – Deanna Persson, President

The Northwoods Humane Society is embraced by the American Birkebeiner through the Barkie Birkie Race with the proceeds from the race going to the NHS animals. Our thanks to Connie Meeks, who coordinates the event, and to her hearty team of volunteers. This is a high energy event – if you have not seen it before, make an effort to be downtown in Hayward on February 24 at 9:30 a.m. to see the start and finish.

Skijoring combines cross country skiing with dog power. The skier is attached to his/her dog with a belt and towline. The dog then runs ahead as the skier skis. Skijoring is a team sport which allows both human and canine counterparts to exercise and enjoy the great outdoors.

Skijoring is derived from the Norwegian word skikjøring meaning ski driving. The sport has been around for hundreds of years and originally started using reindeer and wooden skis. The sport also uses horses, but dogs are now the most common animal used in skijoring.

Most medium size dogs (30 pounds and up) who are trained properly can be candidates for skijoring.

Online registration closes on Tuesday, Feb. 22 at 11:59 pm. Race day registration is available (unless race is full) at the Celebration Tent from 8:30 am until 9:45 am. Skiers must be at least 13 years old on race day.

The actual race begins on Main and Second in Hayward at 9:30 a.m. for the 5 km course and 10:15 for the 3 km course and heads up Main Street to 6th Street. The course then turns left onto 6th Street and right onto the fields behind the Hayward Primary School.

From there a large loop circles the Hayward Golf Course. At the completion of the loop the 5K Skijorers will ski a second lap of the same loop. The 3K Skijorers will complete only one lap on the golf course. After completing the required number of laps racers retrace their route back to 6th Street, turn right on Main Street, finishing at the start area.

All dogs must be sufficiently fit to be able to complete the course without risk of injury. Dogs must be healthy and have up-to-date vaccinations.

Race Rules are: Entry is limited to one person + 1 dog. Skijorers may ski using either skate or classic technique. Dogs must be treated humanely at all times. Dogs must be controlled and kept from other teams. Loose dogs are not permitted at any time. Aggressive dogs are prohibited from the event. Waste is the dog owner's responsibility and before or after the race it must be picked up immediately.

Equipment guidelines: Skate or classic skis are allowed. Metal ski edges are not permitted. Skijor belt is required and must be padded. Towline must use internal bungee. The distance between the skijorer and the dog should be between 7 feet and 13 feet and 8 inches. A pulling style dog harness is required with padding around the neck area. Each dog must wear a snug fitting dog collar. Under no circumstances can the towline be attached to the dog's collar or any harness not specifically designed for pulling.

The Barkie Birkie is one of the action-packed Thursday Thrills events. Warm up is limited only to the golf course portion of the course in the direction of race travel. Access to the golf course is behind the

Hayward Intermediate School on 5th Street, only two blocks from the bib pick up tent in the Celebration Zone.

Start Format: The race will be an “interval start”, with teams starting in pairs at 15 second intervals. All teams should arrive at the start line at least 15 minutes before their race. Skijorers must provide their own handlers if there is any concern about maintaining adequate control in the start area. The front tips of the skijorer’s skis must be behind the start line prior to the signal to start. The dog may start “lined

The top three men and women and their dogs in both Skijoring races-the 5K and 3K-will receive awards and all pre-registered skiers will be eligible for great raffle prizes.

Sponsor for the Barkie Birkie is again, Northern Lakes cooperative, Kali’s Kreations, and Kradle.

Come enjoy the race and maybe you will see yourself and your dog enjoying a winter sport together in the coming years.

For more information about the Barkie Birkie, go to www.birkie.com.

Dates to Save: March 10 and 24 and April 7 and 21st – Bingo at Powell’s on the Lake – 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.