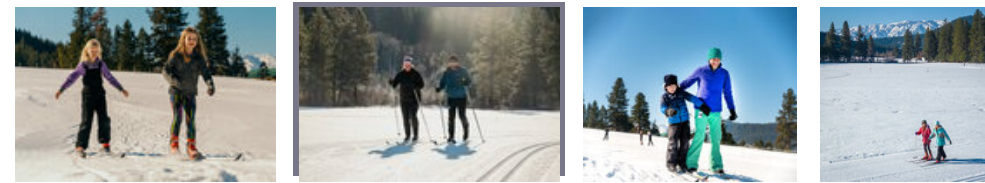




Plain Valley Ski Trails: breaking down barriers for youth skiing



Plain Valley Ski Trails in Plain works to make skiing more accessible to local youth by helping to remove financial barriers. All net proceeds from the group go to fund their ski education programs, Plain Valley Nordic Team. COURTESY OF PLAIN VALLEY SKI TRAILS



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By **QUINN PROPST**
Ward Media Staff Reporter

PLAIN - A local nonprofit, Plain Valley Ski Trails (PVST), works to make skiing more accessible to area youth by helping to remove financial barriers.

PVST created and now maintains a high-quality trail system for the community. All net proceeds from PVST help fund their youth ski education program, the Plain Valley Nordic Team.

"PVST is committed to removing barriers to kids participating in our programs," director Christie Saugen said. "It's been a very exciting last few years as our team continues to grow, both in numbers and goals."

"We empower all goals from the Little Shredders, our preschool program, through our development layers who are outdoors learning how to be active and good teammates, all the way through to the highest levels of racing opportunities," she said.

The team is currently preparing for the 2024 Cross Country Skiing Junior Nationals in Lake Placid, N.Y., on March 11-16.

"Last year, at the 2023 Cross Country Skiing Junior Nationals in Fairbanks, AK, we had our first skier become a national champion and many All-American (top 10) skiers," Saugen said.

"As you can imagine, these trips are expensive for our skiers and families," she said. "We are launching a fundraiser this week to help offset costs and remove those financial barriers for these hard-working young people."

Competing at junior nationals costs about \$3,000 for each athlete.

The fundraiser runs through Feb. 27 and can be found at skiplain.com/donate.

PVST holds three fundraisers a year. This particular one is to help with the costs of junior nationals.

"Fundraising is about 60% of our needed funds to serve our mission, which is, you know, obviously a huge undertaking," she said. "However, every year, we've been unbelievably blown away by people's generosity with not only just individual donors, but then we have business donors and founding club members."

Saugen said there are many pieces of the puzzle that help support PVNT, like the landowners that allow trails on their land, local business sponsors, and the community support they have received through the years.

"I just think it's so integral to our program that it's really supported by so many people," she said.

In 2011, Plain Hardware owner Rob Whitten started the ski trails with the help of local landowners. His goal was to provide a winter activity for youth.

"Look around, Plain," she said. "There's not a ton to do in the winter, and people love skiing and so it kind of started with this vision of, like, what can we do to build community and get kiddos outside in the winter? And so it started very, very small, with the owner of the hardware store asking his neighbor if he could groom some trails across the street (from the hardware store)."

"And it just started to build momentum because it met this wonderful need in the community," she said.

Eventually, the group hired a full-time coach, which many organizations don't do for various reasons. But the goal was to empower the youth, Saugen said.

"So the youth component of the trail has always been the heart of it," she said. "It is our mission to encourage and fund barrier-free ski education programs. And what that looks like to us is we want to make sure that we're not a pay-to-play sport. We want to make sure any kid out in the valley that wants to come can come."

PVNT provides coaching, skis, team jackets, wax for their skis, and more.

PVNT now has three coaches and reaches over 100 kids up and down the valley. Students even come from Leavenworth, Wenatchee, Entiat, and Seattle.

"So the development layers, the exposure layers are really important to, like the whole thing is important, what we want to do is provide opportunities to youth that empower them to become individuals that are able to now function well in society and have friendships and create goals and strive to get them," she said. "We view it as more of an education program and then focus on skiing."

"Skiing is the avenue that we use," she said. "But we want to provide for kids's goals of all ages and abilities."

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Leavenworth Echo on Wednesday
The Chelan County Sheriff's Office is seeking the public's help in finding 37-year-old Adriana Nunez-Gutierrez, who has been missing since early Feb. 16. Nunez-Gutierrez was last seen at her residence in Chelan on February 15 and has not made contact since approximately 2:00 a.m. the following day.

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