

## **MYSL Theodore Wirth Club**

Welcome to the Minnesota Youth Ski League's Theodore Wirth Club. This guide provides information on Theodore Wirth Park, coaching, levels, meeting times, club participation and other logistics to keep your club running smoothly. You can choose either to meet on Saturdays or Sundays.

### About the MYSL Theodore Wirth Club

The Wirth Club of MYSL is a parent-led, all-volunteer nordic ski club that teaches children a love of nordic skiing and how to have fun in the snow. Our focus is on teaching skills through play and games, not racing, but races for fun certainly break out from time-to-time!

Our main strength is the dozens of volunteer coaches (mainly parents) who come out each Saturday or Sunday. MYSL has an easy-to-follow curriculum; any one can learn to coach. For those of you that will not be coaching, we have other volunteer opportunities that we will need you to fill. Given the size of our club, we will need broad participation from parents and expect one parent from each family to volunteer. Please note that we are a club of involved parents, not a provider of ski lessons.

### Coaching

Our all-volunteer coaches are what makes this program happen. MYSL has a week-by-week curriculum that is easy to follow; anyone can be a coach. Consider helping as an assistant coach this year if you would like to give it a try. You will also see high school students from your local nordic team helping as junior coaches. The kids love the junior coaches, and, the junior coaches learn skills and receive credit for their volunteer time. If you know someone who would like to be a junior coach, please let us know.

In late November we hold a meeting for all coaches (usually a Sunday evening) in order to get us all on the same page and to plan for the upcoming season. There is usually also a coaches' training day run by MYSL in early December for any coach wanting to improve upon their coaching skills.

### Theodore Wirth Park

The Wirth Club meets right in front of the Chalet on Theodore Wirth Parkway every Saturday or Sunday at 2:00 p.m. for eight weekends starting early January. This is the Winter Recreation Area and is also used for tubing and snowboarding and can become very congested. Please arrive early and allow extra time to get your skier to their level's meeting area. Note the following:

- Parking. There is a large parking lot in front of the Chalet as well as two overflow lots across the parkway from the Chalet (one directly across, one just north on the parkway). Or, there is parking in the neighborhood up Plymouth Avenue (over the bridge) or just south on the parkway at the Par-3 building. Note that plowing of the lots can be spotty; after a snowfall arrive early.
- The Chalet. The Park Board considers the Chalet primarily a summertime golf clubhouse; as such, it can be a bit cramped in the winter. Currently, we use the small room just past the men's restroom (to the back and to the left) to distribute snacks and to drop gear. The kilometer clipboards are also posted on a wall in this room. Feel free to use any space in the Chalet, though. Note that the Park Board often rents the upstairs rooms to weddings and other events and are not usually available to the public.
- Ski Trails. When there is plenty of snow, we make use of most all the ski trails in Wirth Park; Levels 1 and 2 may stay close by the Chalet, but higher levels will venture out onto the front or back 9, to Twin Lake, or even to the Wildflower Garden, Quaking Bog, and back. Don't be fooled: because Wirth Park has a snow-making loop behind the Chalet, even when it is relatively warm and brown near your house, conditions can be quite good at Wirth on the snow-making loop.

## The First Day

We will all meet on the flat area between the Chalet and the parking lot the first day. (Your specific level may meet nearby for later sessions and if snow conditions dictate.) Meeting areas for each MYSL skill level will be designated by a color-coded sign:

Level 1 – Red  
 Level 2 – Purple  
 Level 3 – Blue  
 Level 4 – Yellow  
 Level 5 – Teal  
 Level 6 – Fuchsia

Coaches for each level will be in their level's meeting area wearing a corresponding colored scarf or bib.

Upon arrival, please proceed directly to your group level meeting area or into the Chalet to receive your bib. Coaches will check in your skier and provide a bib for them to use throughout the season. We require that a parent accompany any child not yet in first grade during the session (typically Level 1; you may walk along or wear your skis--beginners do not travel very far).

Skiers are required to wear their bibs each week so that they can be easily identified as MYSL skiers (and it really helps everyone learn the childrens' names). Many families keep their bibs in the car between sessions (or in a ski bag or with clothing) to avoid forgetting them. Bibs must be returned to the Club on the last day.

### Throughout the Season

During the season, our coaches will be working with our skiers to have fun on the snow and develop cross-country skiing skills. The coaches use the MYSL ski curriculum which focuses on specific goals for each level. Please familiarize yourself with the goals for your skier so that you can be aware of what your skier is working on and offer encouragement. The level goals are posted at: "mysl.org."

Also available on our Web page is the club's weather policy. Depending on skiing conditions (too cold, lack of snow, conflict with a race, etc.) the club may delay the start of a session or cancel a session. If this occurs, the club leader will send an e-mail message (to the e-mail address provided when you registered) to all families as early as possible, but possibly the morning of your session. Canceling a session due to weather is rare. As far as we can remember, only one session has ever been cancelled, and that was when it was -30 wind chill, only the snow-making loop was open, it was all ice, and a race was going on. Even then, a few coaches were willing to meet! Even if there isn't quite enough snow, your coaches may still decide to meet and do a hike, hill climb, or other activity.

Throughout the season, it is important to be at your level's meeting area and ready to ski by 2:00 p.m. Due to parking constraints and the distance some meeting areas will be from the Chalet, this may require arriving at the park well before the session. Levels will leave their meeting areas shortly after 2:00 p.m. and club leaders may not know in which part of the park they are skiing. MYSL skiers that are not accompanied by an adult or with their level will be asked to wait in the Chalet.

Parents are welcome to ski with their children at all levels; doing so can make skiing a family activity and can help our coaches teach. (And, you may be called upon to assist with a game, which will be a big help to us!) Please note: A parent is required to accompany any child not yet in first grade, or who might need assistance during the session, so that our coaches can remain focused on teaching the group. We encourage parents of older children to ski with them as well!

During the first couple of weeks, coaches will be assessing their skiers to break them into smaller groups or to recommend a change in level. Please note any group designation. We try hard to put each child into his or her appropriate level and to ensure that each level has children of about the same speed, fitness and maturity. If you think your child would do better in a different level, please check with both the coach of the current level and the coach of the new level.

Once ski race season heats up, some of our coaches are off at races honing their skills. If you are a coach and will be away, please let the lead coach for your level and the coach coordinator know. If your child needs to be absent for a session, no worries; there is no need to let us know.

### Weekly Snacks and Counting Kilometers

After each session, we meet inside the Chalet for a quick snack and to warm up. Parents will be assigned to bring a snack on one of the eight weeks in more or less alphabetical order and a list will be distributed each week and posted in the Chalet. If you can't bring a snack on your assigned week, simply switch with another family. Appropriate snacks are fruit, cheese, granola bars, juice, or similar. Go easy on the sugar please; the kids are headed home to dinner after the session no doubt.

We also encourage each skier to keep track of their total kilometers skied during the season using either the MYSL on-line K-counter or the clipboard kilometer charts that will be in the snack room. Those skiers reaching levels of 25, 50 and 100 kilometers skied for the year (any time, any place) will receive a special pin and recognition at year end.

### Weekly Messages

Skiing conditions can change rapidly, races can be rescheduled, and there will be weekly updates concerning snacks, room changes, coaching, meeting locations, etc. Please expect at least one weekly message mid-week regarding the upcoming weekend session; if conditions are changing, stay posted. E-mail messages will be sent to the e-mail address you provided upon registration.

### Closing Celebration

Typically, we hold our closing celebration right after our last session upstairs in the Chalet. We distribute pins and hats all skiers, and special kilometer pins to those who have logged their kilometers on the charts. We acknowledge our coaches and relax and socialize. We'll also collect the bibs and make plans for next year.

## Your All-Volunteer Club

To make our club work, we need a lot of volunteers. Many of you are volunteer coaches, a contribution greatly appreciated by all of us. For those that are not coaching, we need your assistance in other areas. To be clear, we expect at least one parent in each family to volunteer with the club in some capacity. In some families, both parents are volunteers; thank you! One parent should sign up to volunteer upon registration or afterward for one of these roles:

- Set Up and Take Down. Set up is quick and so is take down. At 1:30 p.m. we set out the yellow markers for each level, bring out the bins with toys, put up our flag outside and make sure that the snack room is ready. After the session we put everything away in the Chalet.
- Chalet Attendants. Not convinced yet that cross-country skiing is for you? Help out by just being in the Chalet. Occasionally, a skier may need to return to the Chalet before the end of the session (too cold, ill, injured, etc.) and is often brought back by one of the coaches. We need to have a couple of adults commit to being in the Chalet each day so that the coach can quickly return to the group and the child isn't left unattended. The Chalet attendants are also responsible for setting out the snacks and cleaning up.
- Closing Celebration. We need a few volunteers to help organize this event – this would be a great thing for a couple of families to take on together. It's easy. Typically we rent out the entire upstairs of the Chalet so everyone can congregate together, share snacks and drinks, hand out kilometer pins, recognize coaches, etc.
- Special Events. In past years, we've had fun through the season with a face painting or hot cocoa event for young skiers, a long ski for older skiers or a costume race day. We've also organized some adult ski lessons. We need volunteers to organize these additional activities.

## Club Organization

The club distributes its responsibilities between the club leader, a skier coordinator, and a coach coordinator. The club leader is responsible for overall coordination, liaison to MYSL and to Wirth Park, setting meeting dates and times, and weekly communication. The skier coordinator handles registration before the season, fields queries, places children into appropriate levels, and sets up for each meeting. Last and certainly not least, the coach coordinator is responsible for recruiting coaches before the season, holding a pre-season coaches meeting, ensuring there are enough coaches for each level at the beginning and throughout the season. We are always on the lookout for anyone willing to fill one of these roles in the future.