

## Friends of Valley Spur Milestones for 2022/2023

Valley Spur operations returned to normal last year, with the Lodge open 7 days a week from 10am to 4pm. Free Kid's Ski Lessons continued and the Taste & Glide Event was celebrated once again. Day trail passes had averaged 2,090 per season from 2016-2020. Last year's passes totaled 1,800, below our average, but an increase from the prior year. We hope to increase day pass sales by promoting our snow conditions and grooming on social media. We have visitors from all over the Midwest and beyond. The majority of the comments, rave about the skiing, grooming and beauty of the area. Many are repeat visitors.

Season members totaled 155 individuals. These individuals ski numerous times during the season. Most are local, but we do sell a fair number of passes to people outside of the area. We have two snowshoe trails at Valley Spur along with snowshoes to rent and a groomed snow bike trail in cooperation with the Munising Bay Trail Network.

There are approximately 50 volunteers for The Friends of Valley Spur. We average approximately 1,600 volunteer hours each year. These volunteers staff and clean the lodge, assist with grooming, run the events, clear the trails, ensure that the lodge has plenty of wood to keep it warm, shovel snow, serve as Board Members, act as ambassadors to Munising and the surrounding area, and take care of any other operating needs. The Friends of Valley Spur operate as a committee under the Noquemanon Trail Network umbrella.

The Friends of Valley Spur has completed several upgrades in the past several years. We have a 2<sup>nd</sup> parking lot for access to our trails. This parking lot allows skiers to access two trails (W & Y) without having to go up or down steep ski hills. The W & Y trails are relatively flat and give skiers a different option. Our new storage building was completed, which keeps our equipment covered and out of the weather. Feel free to come out and see the improvements.

This year, we are kicking off a fundraising drive to purchase new grooming equipment. The jeeps we currently use have over 120,000 miles. The warmer temperatures and wet snow have made the grooming more difficult and hard on the equipment. Our plan is to buy a tractor with tracks and a tiller. The cost is \$210,000-\$225,000 or more depending on market conditions. The tractor/tiller will provide consistently flat skate lanes and classic tracks. We would also be able to use the tractor in the fall to keep the sides of the trails cleared of brush. It is an ambitious goal, but one we feel necessary to continue to offer the best conditions possible.

We have teamed up with Alger County 4-H to offer our Free Kid's Ski Lessons. This combined effort to offer free ski lessons to kids works out great. Classes for groups will be offered throughout the winter, at times that work for both coach and skiers to attend. In addition, to our Youth Ski Program, we will be offering lessons to the Munising Schools, Munising Baptist School, Church groups, and Wisconsin school for at-risk teens, all at no cost. Many youth from area schools will be able to ski and snowshoe during these school sponsored events at Valley Spur. The Friends of Valley Spur will continue to team up with South Bay Outfitters to provide our ski equipment to the public. Skis were free for those 18 and under; 19 and above paid \$10 per day. South Bay Outfitters also offers season-long rentals for both kids and adult season pass holders at a very reasonable price. During the regular season, those 18 and under always ski free at Valley Spur. This gives many individuals the chance to try the sport, at a very minimal cost.

Others using the trails include the NMU Men's and Women's Ski Teams, Wisconsin High School ski teams, the Milwaukee Nordic Ski Club, the Washtenaw Ski Touring Club. In addition, many individuals use the trails as their training grounds for ski marathons.

Our sponsorship money from local business last year, totaled \$6,750 from 19 sponsors. The Friends of Valley Spur greatly appreciates our Sponsors for their continued support. The Friends of Valley Spur Board is very diligent in ensuring the funds they receive go towards making Valley Spur the best Cross Country Ski Trails in the Midwest.