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# IOWA SNOWMOBILER

January 2023 • Volume 44 • Issue 4

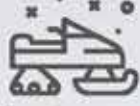
**Vintage  
Lake Racing  
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**Focusing on  
Snowmobile  
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The Official Magazine of the Iowa State Snowmobile Association

www.iowasnowmobiler.com  
1924 270th Street  
Marble Rock, IA 50653  
issa1257@yahoo.com

**ISSA OFFICERS**

**President**

John Kahler  
635 Greene St.  
Slater, IA 50244  
(515) 202-4061  
jfkahler@hotmail.com



**Vice President**

Matt Miner  
11256 Robin Ave.  
Cresco, IA 52136  
(563) 380-7142  
mmmfarms@hotmail.com



**Secretary**

Kelsey Bram  
17313 Packard Ave.  
Clarksville, IA 50619  
(515) 538-0884  
bram.kelsey@gmail.com



**Treasurer/Membership**

Brittany Paulus  
1924 270th Street  
Marble Rock, IA 50653  
(641) 228-0977  
bepaulus@outlook.com



**ISSA COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE**

Jim Willey, Chair  
Becky Willey  
20752 247th St., Delhi, IA 52223  
(563) 920-0911  
james.willey2019@gmail.com

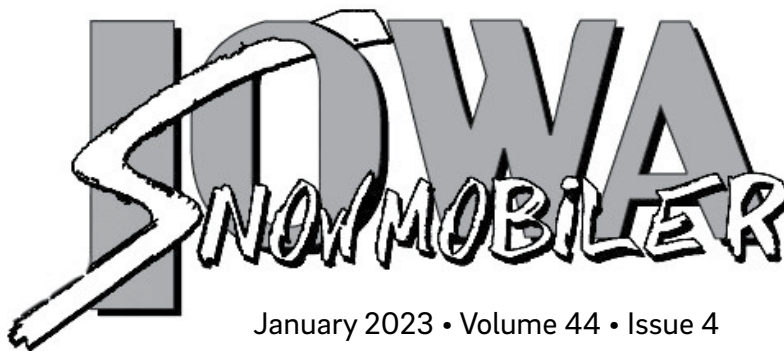
Gary and Karen McVicker  
1012 Lark Ave., Hampton, IA 50441  
(641) 425-1375  
gmcvic@yahoo.com

**Managing Editor**

Cameron Hanson  
2552 Woodland Place  
Charles City, IA 50616  
(641) 330-5565  
editor@iowasnowmobiler.com

**CHANGE NOTIFICATION**

If your club has elected new officers or if you have an address change, please notify the ISSA office at issa1257@yahoo.com. You can also fill out the form at the bottom of the ISSA homepage at www.iowasnowmobiler.com. Thank you.



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**Safety Week**

Clubs invited to promote, publicize safety through activities Jan. 14-22.



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Focus on safety this month includes two ISC seminars on emergency preparedness.



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Region 3 clubs to host LeMans event for 14th straight winter at Clear Lake.



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**Community Outreach**

Driftrunners stay busy throughout year with full calendar of events.



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Also inside...

- Casler reflects on racing career
- ISU team ready to compete at CSC

**Pay Your Dues Electronically**

The ISSA now has a Venmo account to accept electronic payments for membership dues, charitable donations, apparel orders and convention registrations.

In November, the ISSA Board of Directors voted to set up a Venmo account as a way to simplify the membership renewal process.

The mobile app is free to use among Venmo users, but charges may apply for credit and debit card payments. Scan the QR Code today and pay your membership dues quickly and easily.

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COVER: McCain Jennings from Whittemore won four events on his 1995 Polaris XCR 600 at the Midwest Sled Fest on Clear Lake last February. Vintage lake racing returns to Clear Lake for the 14th straight season next month as Sled Fest continues the tradition Feb. 11 along the south shore.

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## JOHN KAHLER

ISSA  
PRESIDENT



Hopefully, when this issue hits your mailbox, you would have had the chance to make some tracks in some snow somewhere.

I have a new sled that I purchased in September of this year, and I'm really looking forward to seeing how it performs compared to all the sleds I've previously ridden. I've had the chance to ride three of the four manufacturers since I started snowmobiling in 2004, and I can find pros and cons with every one of them. But at the end of the day, if I have a smile on my face, that's the best sled out there!

As we move into this month of January, a lot of events start firing up across the state. One of the two biggest events being of course the Driftrunners' SnowFest Jan. 19-22. Coincidentally, the next ISSA Board of Directors meeting will be during SnowFest on Sunday, Jan. 22, at 9 a.m. in Cresco at the Driftrunners' club house on the Howard County Fairgrounds. The plan is to have a shortened agenda that morning and then about 10:30 a.m., hit the trails for a ride on the local trail system.

I want to mention that all ISSA Board of Director meetings are open to the public, and everyone is welcome to attend. Of course, being in Iowa, snow is never a guarantee, so as we get closer to that date, updates on trail and snow conditions will be posted on our Facebook page, our [www.iowasnowmobiler.com](http://www.iowasnowmobiler.com) website and our groomer page.

The other event that Iowa snowmobilers should check out this month is the Okoboji Winter Games Jan. 26-29. Check out their web page for more information and follow the Dickinson County Snowhawks on Facebook.

One little reminder is to buy your trail passes and register your sleds to keep from getting those nasty tickets for not having them. Word on the street is that there are plans for more enforcement this year!

# International Snowmobile Safety Week Jan. 14-22

The ISSA is joining the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association (ISMA) in recognition of Jan. 14-22 as International Snowmobile Safety Awareness Week for 2023. Club-related activities are being encouraged at the local level.

"The purpose of International Snowmobile Safety Week is to expose people to safe snowmobiling practices and to demonstrate how operating safely can prevent mishaps," explained ISMA President Ed Klim. "Snowmobiling is a fun and exciting family activity enjoyed by more than four million people across the United States and Canada. The sport is a safe and enjoyable form of recreation if done properly and with respect."

In Iowa, snowmobiles are operated by men, women and children of all ages. Depending on weather conditions, approximately 8,800 miles of snow-covered trails are maintained and groomed by snowmobile club volunteers across the state. Before heading out to enjoy those trails, ISSA President John Kahler encourages riders to follow these basic safety tips.

"Never ride alone. Always ride with friends or buddies," he said. "Always follow trail etiquette and always ride on the right side. Know your trail conditions and never follow too close. Trespassing is illegal, so stay on the trail!"

"Everything happens fast on a snowmobile, so always ride within your limits and skill set," Kahler continued. "We cannot afford to lose anyone while we are trying to make memories. Please, always remember to never operate while under any type of drug or alcohol."

According to Kahler and Klim, snowmobilers should always take along a spare belt, spark plugs and tools to do basic repairs when they ride. They also said riders should not leave home without emergency supplies, such as a basic first aid kit, and



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overnight survival provisions, such as food, matches, flashlights and extra batteries.

Ideas and suggestions for activities during Snowmobile Safety Awareness Week are available online through ISMA's Campaign Action Manual at [www.snowmobile.org](http://www.snowmobile.org). Also posted there is information on ISMA's Safe Riders! program.

"Activities and events held during Snowmobile Safety Awareness Week should promote responsible attitudes and actions that will foster the safe, family image of snowmobiling," Klim said.

Educational materials from ISMA include the following: posters, fact books, a safety video, public service announcements and decals that highlight safety messages.

"We hope that you will find this web-based information useful in your organization's snowmobile safety campaign," Klim said. "The suggested activities contained there can be modified to meet your club's needs."

## Safe Snowmobiling Means...

1. Never consume alcohol or drugs.
2. Become familiar with the snowmobile you ride.
3. Operate at safe and reasonable speeds.
4. Stay on trails and areas where snowmobiling is permitted.
5. Avoid travel on unfamiliar frozen bodies of water.
6. Use extra caution at night.
7. Keep your snowmobile properly maintained.
8. Become familiar with the terrain you will travel on.
9. Listen to the weather forecast before you leave.
10. Always wear a helmet and proper clothing.
11. Never ride alone and let someone know where you're going.
12. Carry emergency supplies and learn survival skills.





Not to be confused with the snowmobile traction company of a similar name, Woodies Racing is entering its 14th season this winter and describes itself as a “family-owned, multi-discipline” motorsports team. They are best known on the professional snocross circuit but also compete in dirt track racing. Center above is daughter Taven Woodie, and far right is team doctor Trent Hagen.

# Talking Injuries

## ISC seminar discusses snowmobile safety, preparedness at the track and on the trail



By Cameron Hanson

Professional snocross racer Taven Woodie could probably sum up her 2021-22 campaign pretty much the same way she could describe the tracks on which she competes: plenty of ups and downs.

In fact, in a season-ending post on social media last March, the 18-year-old from Milaca, Minn., called them “highs and lows.”

First, the good part. Woodie finished last season third overall in points in the Women’s Pro Am

division. She reached the podium seven of the eight weekends, including a win at Shakopee and a pair of thirds at Dubuque. Now, the not-so-good part. En route to that on-track success, she was often reminded just how demanding the sport can be physically.

Throughout last season, the #873 Arctic Cat racer endured plenty of bumps and bruises, suffering two concussions and two broken noses. “We definitely had the highest of highs and the lowest of lows,” she wrote on Facebook. “From getting run over by three sleds during the first race of the season to getting stitches on the third, there were so many other things” to overcome.

At the invitation of the ISSA, Woodie

returned to Dubuque last June to discuss her season, her sport and her injuries at the 54th Annual International Snowmobile Congress. The ISSA hosted the event, and Woodie participated in several seminars, including a panel discussion on women in snowmobiling and another on snowmobile injuries with her team physician, Dr. Trent Hagen.



Dr. Trent Hagen and snocross racer Taven Woodie meet with snowmobilers after their ISC seminar on ‘Common Snowmobile Injuries — Prevention and Treatment’ last June in Dubuque.

## MATT MINER

ISSA VICE PRESIDENT



Greetings, fellow snowmobilers.

Hopefully, when you are reading this, Mother Nature has dropped some of the white gold, and you have put some miles on your sleds. As you know, Iowa has some of the best trails to ride, and the clubs that take care of them are the greatest around.

From the Driftrunners in northeast Iowa with their annual SnowFest Jan 19-22 to the Dickinson County Snowhawks in northwest Iowa that help with the Iowa Winter Games Jan 27-29 to the Saylorville Dam Snowmobile Club that hosts the Spina Bifida Ride in Huxley on Feb. 5, our clubs and members take great care of their trails and want to show them off.

So, if you have a spare day or a weekend, load up your sleds, grab some friends and go see a new trail system. Someone from that club will be more than willing to take you around their trail system and show how great it is. As you are out riding, don’t forget to thank all of the sponsors of the clubs and the volunteers who make the trails great.

As I have just said, each club has some great areas or events to ride. So if your club is having a poker or fun run, a vintage snowmobile ride, a radar run or just a club ride on the weekend, please let the ISSA know so we can put on our Facebook page or the website to let people from around the state know so they can try to attend. The more people who know, the more who can try and make it.

I know that each snowmobiling event that I have attended over the years, I meet and make friends with lots of new people. To each club, I would like to make it to one of your club meetings, so please let me know when and where you have it, and I will do my best to make it. Also if you have any questions or concerns, PLEASE GIVE ME A CALL. As always, the board is open to new ideas and ways to keep snowmobiling great in Iowa.

As this is the last magazine till the fall of 2023, please watch the ISSA website and Facebook page for updates and information about what is happening around the state and dates for stuff like the ISSA Scholarship deadline, the ISSA Awards program, Campout, ISC or info on the 2023 ISSA Convention.

Thanks again to everyone who helps with making snowmobile fun and safe. Have an enjoyable riding season.



ISC 2022 Report

## REGION DIRECTORS

### REGION ONE

Kevin Winters, Director  
PO Box 305, Lake Park, IA 51347  
(712) 320-9530



Randy Magg, Assistant  
1728 280th Ave.  
Spirit Lake, IA 51360  
rdmagg5460@gmail.com



Steve Wiersma, Assistant  
5801 370th Street  
Primghar, IA 51245  
(712) 461-2774



### REGION TWO

Jason Harvey, Assistant  
1826 450th Ave.  
Estherville, IA 51334  
(712) 392-0475  
emmetcodriftbusters@gmail.com



Jeremy Walker, Assistant  
1402 170th St.  
LuVerne, IA 50560-8552  
(515) 341-1626  
jlkwalk@gmail.com



### REGION THREE

Ben Diekhuis, Director  
2115 Nash Ave.  
Britt, IA 50423  
(515) 291-2329, diekhuis@gmail.com



### REGION FOUR

Seth Bram, Director  
17313 Packard Ave.  
Clarksville, IA 50619  
(641) 512-1932, sethbram@gmail.com



Brent Nauman, Assistant  
23667 210th St., Rockford, IA 50468  
(641) 425-8964  
bmnauman@gmail.com

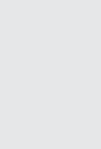


Jeremy Wolf, Assistant  
3006 Cheyenne Ave.  
Nashua IA 50658  
(641) 330-7410  
jeremy.randjtrucking@yahoo.com



### REGION FIVE

Kate Taylor, Director  
18325 90th St.  
Maynard, IA 50655  
(563) 920-3306  
kdtaylor2009@hotmail.com



Steve Vorwald (Sherri), Assistant  
1582 210th St.  
Manchester, IA 52057  
(563) 927-5362



*Women's Pro Am racer Taven Woodie finished third both days at last year's snowcross event in Dubuque.*

Also accompanied by her mother, Kym, and brother, Kaden, Woodie discussed the importance of strength and conditioning throughout the year and how that dedicated training regimen can translate to improved performance on the track. They also talked about diet and food sensitivity testing and how that contributes to their overall health.

"Snowcross is a really punchy, aggressive sport," explained Kaden, who recently transitioned from the track as a rider to the shop as a mechanic. "You are putting out 110 percent effort for seven to 12 minutes at a time, so we have to train in high intensity to build up your stamina for that style of riding."

"Your training really depends on your riding style, but you have to have a strong core," Kym added. "In snowcross, you are literally throwing around a 500-lb. refrigerator for 10 minutes straight. You are always adapting and seeing where your weak points are and where your strong points are. As we go from season to season, you need to stay conditioned."

"I can tell you these folks are not sitting around eating Twinkies," Hagen joked.

### Partnership began two years ago

To help them in their training and physical conditioning, Woodies partnered with Hagen two years ago. Hagen is a second-generation chiropractor from Galena, Ill. He specializes in acupuncture and functional medicine and has worked with professional ATV racers the past 10 years. He can now be found in the pits on race day with the Woodies.

"He keeps us in tune and keeps us straight," Kym said.

"I put them back together after they've been out on the track," Hagen said, describing their relationship as "a big family." "I'm right there at the track, so if something happens, I can take care of them. We have everything we need in the hauler, and

one nice thing about snowcross is we have a mobile medical unit on site, so we can take an injured rider over there if they need an ultrasound or X-ray."

Hagen, who grew up riding snowmobiles and even raced go-karts for a period during his younger days, discussed the inherent risks in the sport and reinforced the need to wear proper gear while racing. He is a staunch advocate of chest protectors and quality helmets to cover what he calls the "box," the vulnerable region of the upper body.

"Whenever someone has an accident or gets injured, you really need to look at the box," Hagen said. "The extremities can be fixed. You really want to look at the torso and the head and neck area. Do they have pain in their chest or abdomen? Do they feel pressure? They could be bleeding out internally. You know when Taven got ran over on the track last year, her helmet and protective gear did their job."

Besides providing a behind-the-scenes look at a professional snowcross team, much of what the Woodies and Hagen discussed at Congress can also be applied to trail riders. In addition to emphasizing the need for protective gear, Hagen said snowmobilers should always carry first aid kits, survival essentials and emergency contact information for the area in which they are riding.

"If you have an accident or come upon one, you need to be prepared. Have game plan, so you have an idea of what you can do," he said. "Call or send for help. Stay with the injured party but don't move them in case they have a head, neck or spinal injury. Leave their helmet on and just stabilize the rider and let them know help is on the way. You just have to be prepared and don't panic."

Hagen also reinforced the long-standing safety tips of never riding alone and remaining sober while out on the trail. He said more than half of the snowmobile deaths each winter are related to alcohol. He said if riders want to drink, save it for the end of day when the riding is over.

"If you have one drink, you are impaired. Your reaction time is slow. It thins your blood and makes you feel colder," he said. "Safety is always first. Be comfortable in your surroundings and wear protective gear. I can tell you there's a lot more equipment available now than when I was younger. Bottom line is you want to have fun, but be prepared because things do happen."



# Teaming Up with Local Emergency Management



Snowmobile clubs encouraged to lend support during winter storms

by Cameron Hanson

If they haven't already done so, snowmobile clubs in Iowa are being encouraged to provide a list of volunteers to help local law enforcement and first responders reach stranded motorists or snowbound residents during winter emergencies. It's more than just goodwill. It could save a life.

Over the years, snowmobile clubs have stepped up in several ways to provide valuable assistance to emergency management personnel during blizzards, either through the use of groomers on drifted roads, giving rides to drivers and passengers from the Interstate to the nearest hotel or providing a rescue cutter to retrieve an injured rider.



ISC 2022 Report

"We've experienced several severe snowstorms in the past where motorists are literally stuck in drifts that are 10 feet tall, and we've had to go out in the Tucker groomer and on snowmobiles to retrieve them," said Sgt. Brad Comer from the Manchester Police Department.

"I would ask that all of you work with your local law enforcement and fire department and let them know what you can do to assist them," he continued. "Explain to them what you can do. You know your capabilities. They will appreciate it."

A snowmobiler himself, Comer is a member of the Snow Pioneers in Region 5 and was invited by the ISSA to lead a seminar on 'How to Work with your Local Police, Fire Department and Emergency Management' at the 54th Annual International Snowmobile Congress in Dubuque last June.

Comer has served in local law enforcement for more than 17 years and has also been a member of the Manchester Fire Department for nearly as long. He is no stranger to working with multi-jurisdictional incidents that require extensive communication and planning.

"If it's in the middle of winter and the middle of a snowstorm, and you're getting called out to go get stranded motorists—which is something that may happen quite often—make sure you are able to ride in those conditions," Comer said.



Sgt. Brad Comer with the Manchester Police Department offers advice on working with local officials at ISC.

"If it's not safe for you, don't do it. You should only be going out on a buddy system. You shouldn't be going out on your own," he added. "We have a rule of minimum two-person teams, and we try to have three to four, depending on how many people we have available."

When reporting to an emergency scene, Comer said to always check in with incident command. Besides stranded motorists or assisting ambulance crews, snowmobilers may also be asked to search for missing persons or assist with off-road accidents, including snowmobile mishaps.

"We always ask volunteers to work in their assigned areas and then go back and get another assignment," Comer said. "Just don't start wandering around on your own. It will cause problems, believe me."

"If you're out there helping someone who's injured, stay calm," he advised. "Talk slow and reassure them that help is on the way, because the last thing you want is someone yelling and screaming. Keep calm and don't add any more stress to the situation."

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**REGION SIX**  
Jamie Rohlf, Director  
408 Center, Wall Lake, IA 51466  
(712) 830-2196  
jrohlf70@gmail.com



Gene Gerdes, Assistant  
P.O. Box 826, Lake View, IA 51450  
(712) 665-8541  
gaskgerdes@gmail.com



**REGION SEVEN**  
David Eide, Director  
3339 Stagecoach Rd.  
Stratford, IA 50249  
(515) 835-8000



**REGION EIGHT**  
Rob Schneider, Director  
1864 Marsh Ave.  
Marshalltown, IA 50158  
(641) 750-7927  
17schneider@gmail.com



**REGION NINE**  
Jamie Prull, Director  
1101 First Street, Palo, IA 52324  
(319) 981-0397  
jprull@prullgroup.com



Todd Sieverding, Assistant  
27818 Sieverding Ridge Rd.  
Bellevue, IA 52031  
(563) 599-0584  
tsfire10@gmail.com



**REGION TEN**  
Aaron Dorothy (Anna), Director  
502 E. Cedar Ln., Mt. Pleasant IA 52641  
(319) 986-5188(h), (319) 217-6361(c)  
aaron65@hotmail.com



Jim Fitzgibbon  
1729 180th St., Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641  
(319) 931-3410  
drumcat9800@gmail.com

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Scott Nauman (2020-21)  
402 Fifth St.  
Rudd, IA 50671  
(641) 425-9898  
sdnauman04@gmail.com



Brian Carmichael (2019-20)  
1369 Midway Ave.  
Tripoli, IA 50676  
(319) 215-5006  
snohawk68@gmail.com



Chris Willey (2017-18)  
1765 Firefly Road  
Manchester IA, 52057  
(563) 920-9010  
kioti79@gmail.com



Merv Hoermann (2007-08, 2015-16)  
*Deceased*

Jim Willey (2013-14)  
20752 247th St.  
Delhi, IA 52223  
(563) 927-4670, (563) 920-0911  
james.willey2019@gmail.com



Gary Burger (2011-12)  
7255 NW 54th Court  
Johnston, IA, 50131  
(515) 334-0360,  
gary@burgersofiowa.com



Gary McVicker (2009-10)  
1120 110th Street  
Hampton, IA 50441  
(641) 425-1375  
gmcvic@yahoo.com



Terry Durby (2005-06)  
44232 Hwy 69  
Leland, IA 50453  
(641) 590-7007  
tdurb@yahoo.com



Jerry Kramer (2003-04)  
1930 Lincoln Ave.  
Humboldt, IA 50548  
(515) 890-1099



Dennis Nauman (2001-02)  
1540 Kirkwood Ave.  
Floyd, IA 50435  
(641) 425-4141  
cdnauman@myomnitel.com



Jeff Jans (1999-2000)  
308 2nd St. NW, P.O. Box 153  
Fostoria, IA 51340-0153  
(712) 262-3309

Bruno Andreini (1997-98)  
2306 230th St., Dallas Center, IA 50063  
(515) 240-3858  
awbrunoa3@gmail.com



Dave Carmichael (1995-96)  
*Deceased*

# Unexpected Turn

## Past ISSA President Vagts reflects on snowmobile accident from last February



by Cameron Hanson

A sunny, Saturday afternoon trail ride near his cabin in the Northwoods of Wisconsin took an unexpected turn for Past ISSA President Dale Vagts last February. Instead of returning home by dark, he was involved in a serious snowmobile accident and spent the next 13 days in a Duluth, Minn., hospital.



Dale Vagts

On Feb. 26, Vagts had been riding with another family when the unfortunate situation occurred. Like most, the accident happened in the blink of an eye. He had been waiting for the rest of the group to catch up at an intersection, and as they came into view, he reached for the throttle with his outstretched hand to continue on.

As his torso was still rotated back toward the oncoming trail, his thumb slipped off, causing the sled to jerk forward. His natural response was to lunge forward and grab the handlebar. In doing so, he lost control of his sled, forcing it to careen off the trail and down the side of the hill toward the lake they were approaching.

After a 50-foot drop, both he and his sled struck a tree head on, coming to rest in about four feet of snow. Besides injuring his upper body, the collision temporarily knocked him unconscious. His nine-year-old passenger, Evie, who had also been bucked off, suffered a slight concussion and small skull fracture and was bleeding out of her nose and mouth.

“I really didn’t have time to react to anything,” Vagts recalled four months later. “She went off the right side. I went off the left side, and unfortunately, her parents, who were riding behind us, did not realize we had gone off the trail. When I finally got to my senses, I could see them going across the lake we were headed to.”

Following the crash, Evie was able to make her way back around to Vagts, and together, they walked “hand-in-hand” down the rest of the way to the lake. By then, Evie’s parents had turned around after realizing they were no longer following Vagts. Once they reached them, they called for help and began rendering first aid.

“Luckily, Evie’s mom is an intensive care nurse, and she went right to work on her daughter,” Vagts said. “Shortly thereafter, two more groups of snowmobilers—each

with a trauma nurse riding with them—had come across us, and they stopped to help as well.

“Needless to say, we were very fortunate that day, and we definitely had some angels watching out for us,” Vagts said. “All three nurses had us prepped and ready to go, and to me, it seemed the first responders were there right away with a four-track ATV and a hardboard to take us back to the waiting ambulance.”

### Hospitalized for nearly two weeks

After a local MRI, Vagts was immediately transferred to the Trauma Care Unit at St. Mary’s Hospital in Duluth. In addition to lung injuries, he had suffered six broken or dislocated ribs, a broken collarbone, broken scapula and a torn rotator cuff. The situation would worsen later that week when a nicked artery led to internal bleeding and a “tremendous amount of pressure in my rib cage,” Vagts said. “They ended up draining a liter and a half of blood from my chest cavity.”

Following two surgeries and nearly two weeks in and out of the Intensive Care Unit, Vagts was able to return home and eventually recovered from his injuries, although part of his rib cage is now held together with metal plates.

At age 82, Vagts said he was lucky to survive the ordeal. “The doctor told my wife, Joyce, my age was working against me, and he also said most people my age don’t walk out of here, but I guess I’m a



Past ISSA President Dale Vagts took a tree head-on in northern Wisconsin last winter.

stubborn old man,” Vagts said.

As a lifelong snowmobiler and an experienced insurance agent, Vagts said he regrets the accident and wishes another individual had not been involved. He said he was just trying to keep Evie warm on the trail as the windshield on his sled was taller than her father’s windshield.

“This was just something that seemed so innocent that went so wrong,” Vagts said. “But I’d also like to think there was so much that went right for us that day with all of the right people being there... the nurses, the first responders and more. I

still don’t know how they got there so fast. We were out in the boonies, and they were able to get the ambulances within a couple hundred yards of us.”

Last month, Vagts reported that Evie has also made a full recovery from the accident, and he also said he has replaced his wrecked sled with an identical model. He said he is “ready to ride again this winter” and has a renewed appreciation for his favorite winter pastime.

“This just shows you that it could happen to anybody, so we have to be alert at all times on our snowmobiles,” Vagts said.

## 2023 Snowmobile Iowa Schedule

Date	Host	Location	Contact
Jan. 14	Team Iowa Snowmobilers	Stratford Fire Department 630 Highway 175 Stratford	David Eide (515) 835-8000
Jan. 21	Cresco Driftrunners	Howard County Fairgrounds 220 7th St. W Cresco	Brandon Paht (563) 605-0141
Jan. 28	Butler County Snow Snoops	TJ’s Bar & Grill 123 E. Traer St. Greene	Seth Bram (641) 512-1932
Feb. 4	Saylorville Dam Snowmobile Club	Ballard West Elementary 106 E. Main St. Slater	Barry Starmer (515) 240-5444
	North Iowa Snow Seekers	Lone Oak Bar 104 Weimer St. Ventura	Chad Brouwer (641) 425-4872
Feb. 11	Emmet County Driftbusters	J&K Snowmobile 2703 Seventh Ave. S. Estherville	Jason Harvey (712) 392-0475
Feb. 18	Sac County Snow Lovers	416 S. Main St. Lake View	Jamie Rohlf (712) 830-2196
Feb. 25	Central Iowa Snowmobilers/Tri-County Snowmobile Association	Traer Golf and Country Club 1673 Highway 63 Traer	Rob Schneider (641) 750-7927

## Host Clubs Still Sought for State Rides

Organizers for the ISSA’s Snowmobile Iowa program have filled each weekend on the ride schedule this winter but only one Saturday has two options. As announced at the state convention in November, the goal this year is to have two rides each weekend to improve the chances for rideable snow.

With the exception of Feb. 4, ride coordinators Seth Bram and Bruno Andreini are looking for additional clubs to host the other dates listed on the schedule above. If your club is interested in stepping up, please contact Andreini at (515) 240-3858 or awbruno3@gmail.com or Bram at (641) 512-1932 or sethbram@gmail.com.

Now in its seventh season, Snowmobile Iowa is a spin-off of the long-established club showcase at convention of the same name, where clubs set up booths to display their trails, maps and event photos. Andreini wanted to take that concept a step further by encouraging clubs to host organized snowmobile rides and to brag about their trails firsthand.

Each ride starts at 10 a.m., and Andreini said he prefers the planned routes to stay within 50 to 60 miles. Host clubs are asked to provide a ‘Ride Captain’ to lead the group and then have two or three members follow up at the rear to make sure participants stay on course, since many will likely be unfamiliar with the area.

Each host club is expected to provide trail maps. Organizers should also plan for lunch and fuel breaks for ride participants. Trail conditions and lodging information should also be posted as each event draws near. If the weather does not cooperate, a ride is typically not cancelled until the Thursday before.

Scott Kooiker (1993-94)  
261 160th Ave.  
Ellsworth, MN 56129  
(507) 360-4667  
sjkooiker@hotmail.com



Dale Vagts (1991-92)  
24573 Kings Rd.  
Cresco, IA 52136  
(563) 547-2161



Dick Melick (1989-90)  
*Deceased*

Roger Muth (1987-88)  
365 West 5th St., Garner, IA 50438  
(641) 923-3560

Larry Childs (1986)  
311 E. Prospect St., Manchester, IA 52057-1456  
(563) 927-5934

Dan Martin (1984-85)  
4712 Candlelight Dr., Davenport, IA 52806  
(563) 386-3769

Marv Heikens (1982-83)  
*Deceased*

Chuck Colegrove (1981)  
5606 6th Ave., Armstrong, IA 50514  
(712) 864-3170

Rich Moench (1980)  
2155 Iowa Ave., Humboldt, IA 50548  
(515) 332-3587

Gary Fairchild (1979)  
933 170th St., Ogden, IA 50212  
(515) 275-4133

Bill Nordstrom (1978)  
*Deceased*

Gary Bruns (1977)  
102 Honeysuckle, Baytown, TX 77520

Richard Grosse (Mar 1975-Dec 1976)  
7543 Ford Rd., Janesville, IA 50647  
(319) 987-2155

Larry Huntley (Nov 1973-Mar 1975)  
401 East 1st St., Alta, IA 51002

## COMMITTEES

ALS CHARITY LIAISON  
Brian Carmichael, snohawk68@gmail.com

AWARDS  
OPEN

BREAST CANCER AWARENEES  
OPEN

BUDGET/FINANCE  
Brittany Paulus, bepaulus@outlook.com

BY-LAWS AND SOPS  
Matt Miner, mmmfarms@hotmail.com

CHARITY  
Brittany Paulus, bepaulus@outlook.com

COMMUNICATIONS  
Jim Willey, james.willey2019@gmail.com

CONVENTION 2022  
Matt Miner, mmmfarms@hotmail.com  
Seth Bram, sethbram@gmail.com

EFC  
Matt Miner, mmmfarms@hotmail.com

GROOMER TRAINING COORDINATOR  
Chris Willey, ISSA.RSC@gmail.com

IOWA REC TRAILS ADVISORY REP  
John Kahler, jfkahler@hotmail.com

LEGISLATIVE  
Jim Willey, james.willey2019@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP  
Brittany Paulus, bepaulus@outlook.com

NOMINATIONS  
Jim Willey, james.willey2019@gmail.com

PROMOTION  
Jason Harvey, emmetcodriftbusters@gmail.com

RAFFLE  
Seth Bram, sethbram@gmail.com

REVIEW & SELECTION  
Terry Durby, ISSA.RSC@gmail.com  
Chris Willey, ISSA.RSC@gmail.com

TRAIL SIGN & TRAIL DEVELOPMENT  
Matt Miner, mmmfarms@hotmail.com

SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION  
Bruno Andreini, awbrunoa3@gmail.com

SPINA BIFIDA CHARITY LIAISON  
Craig Krapfl, ckrapfl@gmail.com

## Golden Celebration Planned this Fall

The ISSA will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary Nov. 17-19 with a special convention planned for the Waterloo-Cedar Falls area.

ISSA Vice President Matt Miner and Region 4 Director Seth Bram are co-chairing this Golden Anniversary event. In addition to the normal fanfare, they are planning special guest speakers, commemorative activities and off-site excursions to recognize the milestone.

At the heart of the celebration will be a retrospective of the ISSA over the past five decades. Members are asked to collect and share artifacts and stories from the early days of the ISSA for the event.

The state organization was incorporated on Nov. 20, 1973, and Larry Huntley of Alta was installed as its first president. Since then, 26 other leaders have followed in his footsteps.

Along the way, they helped to guide the organization into a strong and stable presence in Iowa, enduring several low-snow years and facing many legislative challenges that eventually brought about positive changes to the state snowmobile program.

As of press time, a host hotel had yet to be confirmed for this fall's convention. To volunteer or to offer suggestions and ideas, call or text Miner at (563) 380-7142 or Bram at (641) 512-1932.



## Spina Bifida Winter Kids Fun Day Set for Feb. 5 at Huxley

Craig Krapfl from the Saylorville Dam Snowmobile Club in Region 7 is keeping his fingers crossed the early snow from this winter will stick around for the ISSA's Winter Kids Fun Day next month.

Since 2007, the ISSA has hosted this special event for families from the Spina Bifida Association of Iowa (SBAIA), the ISSA's official charity. As the ISSA's liaison to the SBAIA, Krapfl—along with his family and home club—organize the Fun Day on behalf of the state snowmobile association.

Similar to previous seasons, this year's event is planned for Sunday, Feb. 5, at the Safe Room in Huxley. In addition to food, fun and fellowship, the day will include games, entertainment and, best of all,

snowmobile rides on the nearby Heart of Iowa Nature Trail.

Krapfl is asking ISSA members to bring cutters and two-up sleds to the event to help make sure all of the Spina Bifida kids and their families have an opportunity for a ride. Organizers are also looking for additional snowmoile gear to support the dozen or so suits and helmets the ISSA already owns. Blankets will also be provided to keep the participants warm.

To volunteer at the event or if you have questions, contact Krapfl at (515) 707-7237. The Fun Day starts at 11 a.m. with lunch and speakers at noon. Snowmobile rides start at 1 p.m. The address for the Safe Room in Huxley is 515 North Main Avenue.

## Professional Snocross Returns to Dubuque Ski Hill in April

Professional snocross racing returns to eastern Iowa for the seventh straight season in 2023, but after spending the last three Januarys at the Dubuque County Speedway, the national tour returns to Sundown Mountain Resort in Dubuque.

Previously hosting three events through the 2018-19 season, the downhill ski resort will now entertain the series finale for the Amsoil Championship Snocross circuit at the end of their ski season. Slated for April 1-2, the two-day finale will also feature the season-ending awards banquet. Theisen's, which has headquarters in Dubuque, has signed on again as race sponsor.

"A lot of work has gone into our schedule this year to give our races and fans the best experience possible, week-in and week-out," said Snocross President Carl Schubitzke. "We had to leave some long-standing traditions behind, but over the past few seasons, we have been able to build new ones and go to venues that are world-class and ready to push snocross forward."

For tickets and for more information on the 2023 race schedule, visit [snocross.com](http://snocross.com).



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# Vintage Ice Racing Returns to Clear Lake Feb. 11

by Cameron Hanson

A tradition dating back to the 1970s, vintage snowmobile racing on Clear Lake will return for the 14th straight season Feb. 11 as two local snowmobile clubs host the fourth annual Midwest Sled Fest in front of Clear Lake State Park.

As the successor to the Jack Helgren Memorial Race—which ran from 2009 to 2019—Sled Fest last winter drew more than 60 competitors from across the Midwest, including Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota and South Dakota.

More than 20 classes offered youth, vintage, stock and open racing across several engine sizes with payouts to the top three finishers in each. Snowmobilers followed a mile-long, LeMans-style course with most laps ranging from three to 10.

The 600cc Open Class attracted the most interest with close to 30 entries. Officials separated the class into two heat races with the top 20 competing in the final. Taran Eastman from Mason City won the final race of the day, the 25-lap Stud Boy Challenge, which paid out \$500 to the winner.

Hosted by the North Iowa Snow Seekers and the Hancock County Snowmobile Association in Region 3, Sled Fest also featured Kitty Cat races for the younger kids, a radar run, a vintage snowmobile show and on-ice food vendors.

“I thought everything went really well last year,” said race co-director Rusty Peters of rural Rock Falls. “We had a little bit of a challenge setting up the course with blowing snow on Friday, but all of the racers and spectators appeared to have a good time, and we didn’t hear any negative feedback from anyone.”

Organizers thanked sponsors and volunteers for making last year’s Sled Fest a success. Complete race results can be found online at [midwestsledfest.com](http://midwestsledfest.com). For more information or to help out with next month’s event, contact Peters at (641) 420-0248 or visit the race website.



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**Saturday, February 11, 2023**

**Clear Lake State Park  
Clear Lake, IA**

**9 am LeMans Race  
Radar Runs  
Noon Kitty Kat Race  
Youth 120 Race  
3 pm Stud Boy  
Challenge**



**(641) 420-0248 | [midwestsledfest.com](http://midwestsledfest.com)  
[midwestsledfest@yahoo.com](mailto:midwestsledfest@yahoo.com)**

# Full Slate

Driftrunners stay busy throughout the year with club, community events

by Cameron Hanson

The Driftrunners snowmobile club in Region 5 likes to stay busy throughout the year. Follow the club on Facebook or visit their Snowmobile Iowa booth at state convention, and you'll see how full their schedule can get. Club officials believe their activities keep members engaged, which in turn helps them maintain their status as the largest club in Iowa.



**Zach Gooder**  
Driftrunners  
President

The club's flagship event is SnowFest each January, an annual community tradition now in its 52nd year. Conditions permitting, the club also hosts trail rides each week throughout the winter and a trailside chili feed in February. In the off-season, their event calendar features holiday toy drives, landowner appreciation dinners and participation in area parades. This outreach is important to the club's success and longevity.

"I'd like to feel we are in a good position for the future," Driftrunners President Zach Gooder said. "We have a great group of board members who are energetic and dedicated to promoting what we have to offer. I have said it before

many times, but in my time with the Driftrunners, this is the best group of people working together that I have ever seen."

According to membership numbers released at the ISSA convention in November, the Driftrunners ended last winter with 144 members, and since 2017, they have led the state in annual membership totals. Recruitment and retention incentives and initiatives are key and include pre-season membership drives, raffle drawings and electronic dues payment options.

To keep the interest level high, the club also gathers regularly throughout the year. Members hold monthly board meetings during the spring and summer before transitioning to bi-weekly meetings in the fall, when trail prep and groomer maintenance top the agenda. Once the snow starts to fall, the club moves to weekly meetings "for the heart of the season," Gooder said.

"We feel it's important to continue to meet throughout the year, even if there isn't much going on to keep our ideas and projects moving forward," Gooder explained. "A lot of our off-season meetings are just planning for trail improvements—or changes—



The Driftrunners participated in the Holiday Parade through downtown Cresco in late November.



The Driftrunners' Snowmobile Iowa display at the 2022 ISSA Convention in Ames in November.

writing grants, summer parades and building projects."

## Infrastructure improvements

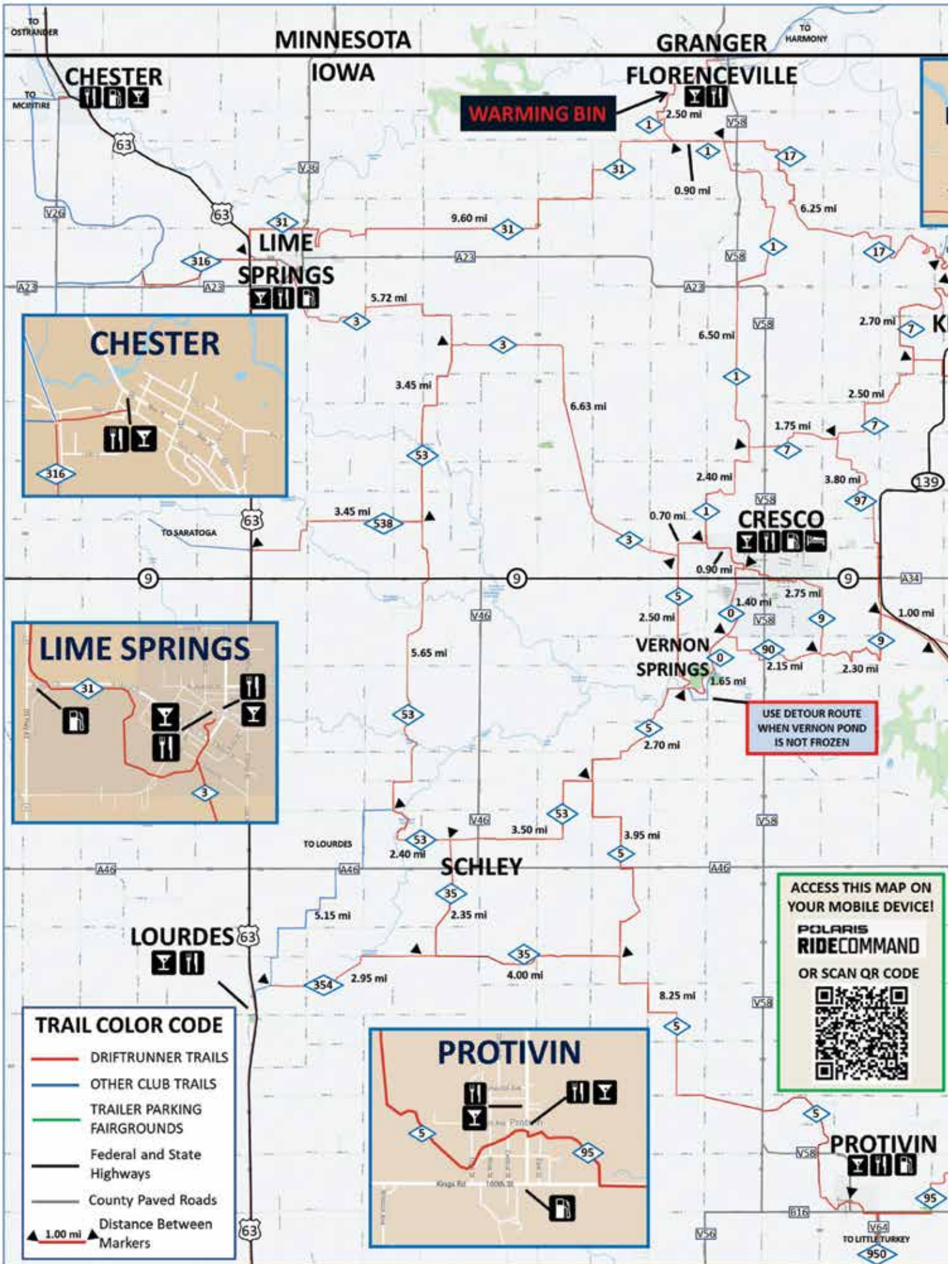
Among their building projects was a floor upgrade last summer in their dedicated clubhouse located on the Howard County Fairgrounds in Cresco. The unheated floor had been settling in one corner so when the groomer thawed out, ice would build up from the melting snow, causing a safety issue for operators as they entered the cab of the groomer.

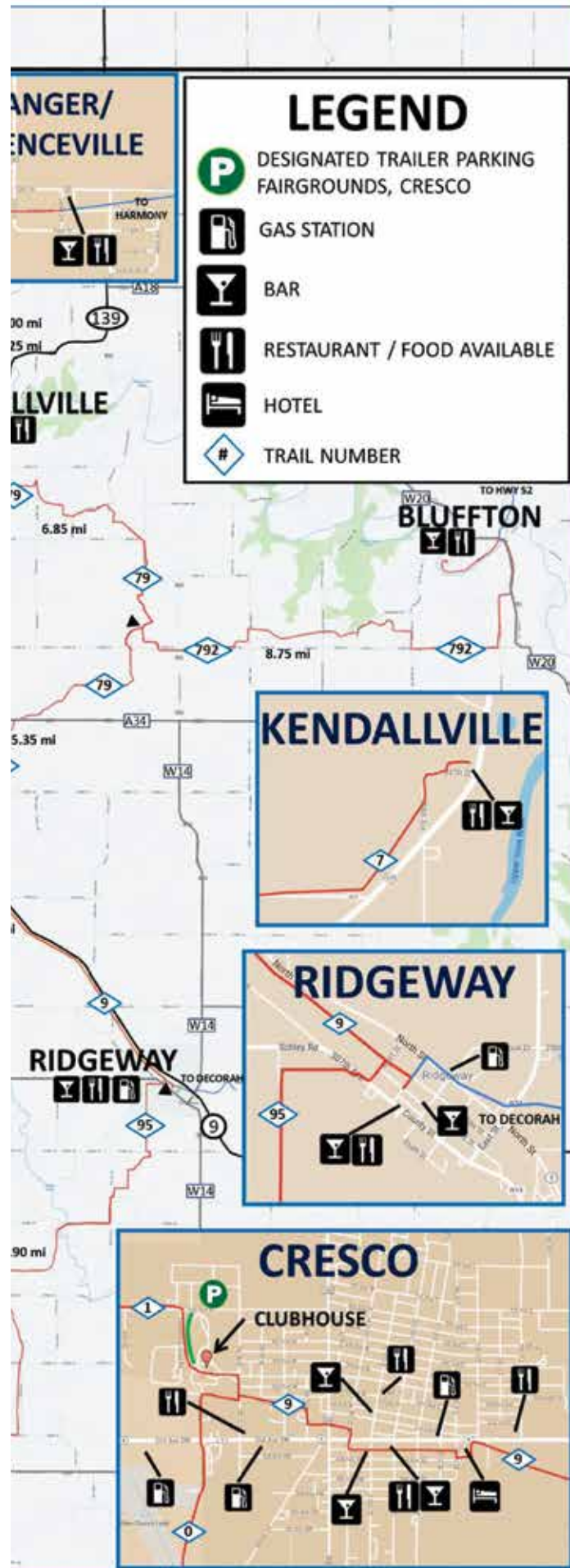
"We had been working on a plan to address this for a few years, and with collaboration of the board, and members, we were able to come up with a solution," Gooder said. "We removed the old concrete and poured new concrete and installed a french-style drain with an overflow pump carrying water into another pit. We installed a trough-style drain down the center of our floor with aluminum grating to cover it."



Always thinking ahead, the club also installed insulation and tubing for the addition of an in-floor heating system down the road. The year prior, the club re-insulated the entire building and put a new roof on, as well as added accent sheeting to the building. Gooder said all of their infrastructure projects could not have been possible without club volunteers and business partners who







# SNOWMOBILE TRAIL MAP



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# SNOWFEST

## January 19 – 22, 2023

### THURSDAY

- EARLY BIRD RIDE - 11 AM
- POKER RUN FOR SPINA BIFIDA BEGINS
- CLUB TRAIL RIDE - 6:30 PM

### FRIDAY

- LADIES TRAIL RIDE - 10 AM
- POKER RUN CONTINUES
- SNOWFEST DINNER - 5 PM
- CLUB TRAIL RIDE - 6:30 PM

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### SATURDAY

- BOY SCOUT BREAKFAST 6-11 AM
- VINTAGE SLED SHOW - 9 AM
- CLUB IOWA RIDE - 10 AM
- CHILI COOKOFF - 11 AM
- BINGO - NOON
- FOOD AND BEVERAGES AT EXPO ALL DAY
- VINTAGE SLED RIDE - 1:45 PM
- JIGSAW PUZZLE RACE - 2:30 PM
- TORCHLIGHT PARADE - 6:30 PM
- BONFIRE - 7 PM
- SNOWBALL DANCE - 8 PM



### SUNDAY

- SNOWFEST BRUNCH - 10 AM
- SUNDAY RECOVERY RIDE - 1 PM



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IN FEBRUARY





*The new floor on the groomer half of the Driftrunners clubhouse includes a center trough drain, insulation and tubing for in-floor heating in the future.*

donated time and materials for the much-needed improvements. “We are very fortunate to have our own clubhouse for meetings and to store our groomer and drag inside, and we want to make sure that our building is well taken care of and looks great to the public,” Gooder said.

### SnowFest tradition

Each January, the clubhouse and fairgrounds serve as home base for SnowFest with this month’s event planned for Jan. 19-22. As detailed on the flyer on p. 16, this year’s schedule includes a variety of activities to appeal to both snowmobiling and non-snowmobiling crowds.

“SnowFest is always a fun time,” Gooder said. “While many events and traditions remain popular, we are always looking to add to what we have to offer. One of the focuses that our club has continued to work on is providing events for families outside of snowmobiling.”

Besides the long-standing Boy Scout breakfast on Saturday morning and the Snowball Dance Saturday evening, the club recently added a Vintage Sled Show and a Chili Cookoff Contest to their general-interest lineup. New this year, the Driftrunners are



*The Driftrunners board is young and energetic and always looking to enhance the club’s exposure within their communities.*

borrowing a page from the local breweries and featuring a Jigsaw Puzzle Competition.

“That has been the latest trend around here with great turnouts,” Gooder said. “It is a unique event that will hopefully attract people whether they ride snowmobiles or not.”

Adding non-snowmobiling events to the SnowFest schedule also ensures the extended weekend will go on with or without decent trail conditions. According to Gooder, over the past five winters, planning for most of SnowFest’s snowmobile events had been delayed by the lack of snow. Not until the week of the event has enough snow fallen to ride.

“Planning activities for non-snowmobilers allows us to host a full slate of events, regardless of what the trail conditions are like,” Gooder said. “We are still able to put on a successful SnowFest whether we can ride our trails or not, but when our trails have adequate snowfall, then we get the best of both worlds.”

### ISSA support

As featured on the center map spread in this month’s issue, the Driftrunners maintain 220 miles of trail in every direction from the fairgrounds. Snow was marginal for last year’s event so Gooder and gang are hoping for a nice rebound this month.

“Last year’s SnowFest was an overall success, but it seems to



*A vintage sled ride and show is planned for Saturday at this month’s SnowFest in Cresco. See the flyer on p. 16 for a complete rundown of weekend activities.*

be a recurring trend that it gets down to the week of the event before we get a good winter storm,” he said. “Last year, our trails were not the best they have ever been for that week, but for what we had to work with, our groomer operators and trail bosses did a phenomenal job keeping our trails open.”

Among the planned trail rides at SnowFest this year is a Snowmobile Iowa ride on Saturday, departing from the fairgrounds at 10 a.m. Snowmobile Iowa is an ISSA program where clubs are encouraged to host trail rides to show off their communities. The club is also hosting the ISSA Board of Directors meeting on Sunday at 9 a.m., followed by a Directors Ride.

According to Gooder, the Driftrunners believe in supporting the state organization. As a 100 percent club, their dues include membership in the ISSA, and member Matt Miner presently serves as ISSA vice president.

The club is a map and platinum sponsor for this publication and also financially supports the Spina Bifida Association of Iowa. In fact, one of their rides SnowFest weekend is a poker run benefiting the ISSA’s official charity.

“We feel it is important for our club to show our support for the ISSA,” Gooder acknowledged. “Without their support of us, we do not get to do what we do.”

## CALENDAR

— See p. 9 for the 2023 Snowmobile Iowa schedule —

**January**

- International Snowmobile Safety Week Jan. 14-22. Visit [snowmobile.org](http://snowmobile.org) for more information.
- Driftrunners' SnowFest Jan. 19-22 at the Howard County Fairgrounds. Follow the club on Facebook for updates.
- ISSA Board of Directors meeting Jan. 22 at 9 a.m. at Cresco.
- University of Okoboji Winter Games Jan. 26-29. Visit [uofowintergames.com](http://uofowintergames.com) for more information.

**February**

- Team Iowa Ice Drags Feb. 4 at Little Wall Lake, Jewell
- ISSA Winter Kids Fun Day Feb. 5 at 11 a.m. at the Huxley Safe Room. Spend the day with families from the Spina Bifida Association of Iowa.
- Emmet County Driftbusters WinterFest Feb. 4-5 on Ingham Lake east of Wallingford.
- Clean Snowmobile Challenge Feb. 7-9 at Eagle River, Wis.
- Take-A-Friend Snowmobiling Week Feb. 11-20. Visit [gosnowmobiling.org](http://gosnowmobiling.org) for more information.
- Midwest Sled Fest Feb. 11 at Clear Lake.
- Driftrunners' Charlie's Chili Feed Feb. 11.
- Butler County Snow Snoops Sixth Annual Vintage Ride Feb. 18.
- Bremer County Sno-Knights poker run Saturday, Feb. 25.

**March**

- ISSA Board of Directors meeting TBD.

**April**

- Amsoil Championship Series Snocross April 1-2 at Sundown Mountain Resort at Dubuque. Visit [snocross.com](http://snocross.com) for ticket information.
- ISSA scholarship applications due April 15. Download materials at [iowasnowmobiler.com/scholarship.html](http://iowasnowmobiler.com/scholarship.html).
- ACSA D.C. Fly-In TBD.

**May**

- ISSA Board of Directors meeting TBD.
- 2021-22 reimbursement requests due to the Iowa State Snowmobile Trail Grant Program May 1.

**June**

- 2022-23 grant requests due to the Iowa State Snowmobile Trail Grant Program June 1.
- 55th International Snowmobile Congress June 7-10 at the TaxSayer Center in Moline, Ill. Hosted by the Illinois Association of Snowmobile Clubs. For more information, visit [www.snowmobilers.org/isc](http://www.snowmobilers.org/isc).

## ISSA Summer Campout Host Needed

The ISSA is soliciting bids from clubs to host the 2023 Summer Campout, normally held in July. As always, the ISSA provides \$200 in incentive money, and as much as \$600 in expenses can be reimbursed through the ISSA. Events can be as simple or as elaborate as desired. If your club is interested in hosting this year's campout, please reach out to your Region Director or contact ISSA President John Kahler at [jfkahler@hotmail.com](mailto:jfkahler@hotmail.com).



## Emmet County Driftbusters, Region 2

by Jason Harvey, President

The existing loop of our trail system is signed, the groomer is tucked away in a nice shed waiting to roll, our new drag should show up soon, and we have everything in place to have a VERY good trail system for this winter.

We had a very good membership drive at AllStar Lanes in Estherville. We had bowling lanes open sponsored by a local business, pizza and appetizers for the attendees, and a good thorough meeting.

The Emmet County Sheriff's Department recently donated three stationary radar units which we plan to use in the future for some local radar runs. A huge thank you goes out to them.

We will be hosting a Snowmobile Iowa club ride on Feb. 11. This is our first one ever, or at least for a very long time, and I'm looking forward to it.

WinterFest planning will be beginning shortly, most of this is by the seat of our pants; but as this is only our second year, I think we are finding our niche quickly.

## Driftrunners, Inc., Region 5

by Zach Gooder, President

Greetings! The season is upon us finally!

The Driftrunners have been very busy this season. We had an excellent turnout for our Kick-Off Dance and Toy Drive at The Pub in Cresco.

Preparations for our 52nd Annual SnowFest are in full swing, and we hope to see all of you on Jan. 19-22. We have a full extended weekend of events planned, some needing snow—and some not—so we should have plenty of events for everyone!

A special thank you to all of our landowners for allowing us to ride over their land year after year, and to our generous volunteers

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that maintain and mark our trail system. It truly takes a team to make it happen! Charlie's Chili Feed is planned for February, stay tuned for updates on the date for that!



*The Driftrunners made the holidays a little brighter for area kids following a successful Toy Drive in November.*

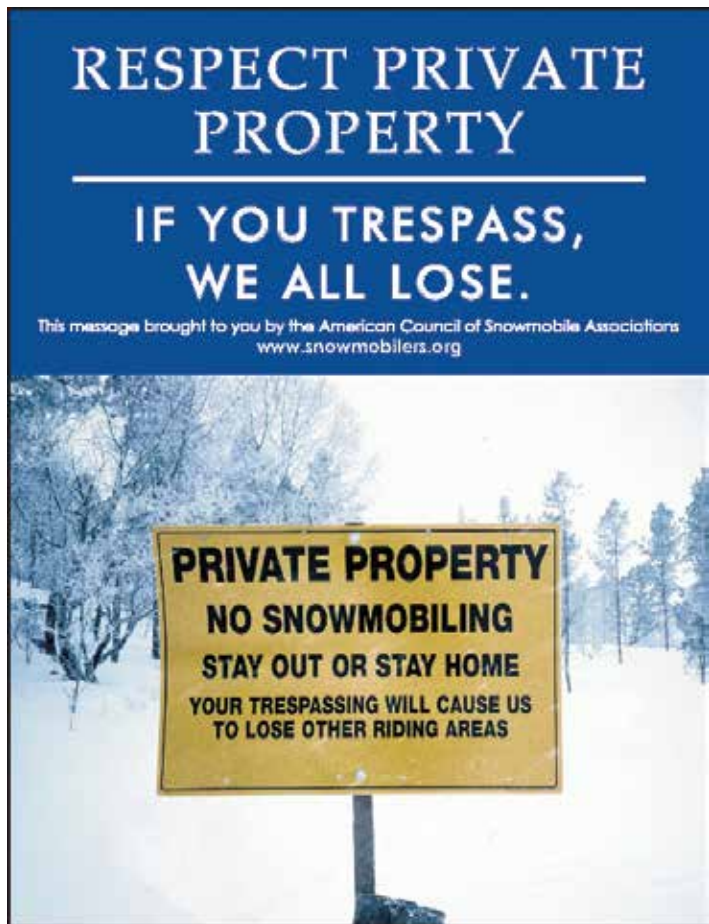
### Saylorville Dam Snowmobile Club, Region 7

by Barry Starmer, President

As I write this article, colder temperatures and the ground is freezing. Hopefully, that will continue, so when we do receive snow, it will not melt.

Our trails have been marked, thanks to the many volunteers who showed up to help. Looks like Wisconsin and Michigan are receiving snow. Hopefully, some of that white stuff will move south.

Until next time, Ride Smart, Ride Safe & See You On The Trail.



## 2023 DONATIONS

### Spina Bifida Association of Iowa

Driftrunners.....	\$1,250
Saylorville Dam Snowmobile Club.....	\$1,000
Cedar Falls Sno Hawks.....	\$500
Central Iowa Snowmobilers.....	\$500
Eastern Iowa Sledheads.....	\$500
Tri-County Snowmobile Association.....	\$500
Floyd County Groomers Association.....	\$300
Bremer County Sno-Knights.....	\$250
Chickasaw Sno-Riders.....	\$250
Frozen Few.....	\$250
Mitchell County E-Z Riders.....	\$250
Snow Pioneers.....	\$200
Trail Blaz-zers, Inc.....	\$200
Winneshiek Trail Twisters.....	\$200
Iowa River Riders.....	\$100
Team Iowa Snowmobilers.....	\$100

### ISSA Lobbyist Club Challenge

Mitchell County E-Z Riders.....	\$500
Central Iowa Snowmobilers.....	\$350
Floyd County Groomers Association.....	\$300
Cedar Falls Sno Hawks.....	\$250
Snow Pioneers.....	\$200
Iowa River Riders.....	\$100
Team Iowa Snowmobilers.....	\$100

### ACSA Legal Defense Fund

Saylorville Dam Snowmobile Club.....	\$250
Floyd County Groomers Association.....	\$200
Team Iowa Snowmobilers.....	\$100

### ISSA Scholarship Foundation

Central Iowa Snowmobilers.....	\$250
Saylorville Dam Snowmobile Club.....	\$250
Chickasaw Sno-Riders.....	\$250
Floyd County Groomers Association.....	\$200
Snow Pioneers.....	\$200
Team Iowa Snowmobilers.....	\$100
Dickinson County Snowhawks.....	\$100

### ISU Clean Snowmobile Challenge

Saylorville Dam Snowmobile Club.....	(\$250+\$500 match) \$750
Central Iowa Snowmobilers.....	\$500
Team Iowa Snowmobilers.....	\$100
Dickinson County Snowhawks.....	\$100

### ALS of Iowa

Team Iowa Snowmobilers.....	\$100
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*Fundraising year renews each November at convention. Please use Venmo or mail donation checks to the ISSA office at 1924 270th St., Marble Rock, IA 50653*



# Addicted to Racing

Casler provides insight to snowmobile drag team at ISSA convention in Ames

by Cameron Hanson

Des Moines' Aaron Casler admits he could have retired by now with the amount of money he's invested in snowmobile drag racing over the last two decades.

However, when you retire, you need a hobby to stay busy, and Casler's only pastime is going fast on a sled, so he said he has no plans on slowing down any time soon...literally.

"I'm not smart enough to get out," he joked at the 2022 ISSA Annual Convention in Ames in November. "It's a rush. I haven't found anything like it. Racing is my drug, and there is no fix for this. I've tried everything. You can at least go to rehab for drugs."

Appearing in front of a wall of oversized trophies and often referring to his pair of turbo performance sleds on display, Casler reflected on his career in snowmobile drag racing during a Saturday afternoon seminar at convention.

Easily considered the fastest snowmobiler in the state, Casler, a north Iowa native, said competing for bragging rights never gets old, and early on, he said he was willing to travel wherever he needed to scratch that itch.

"You start off racing your buddies back home," he said. "Then, as soon as you beat your friends, you kind of run out of people to race, so you enter the pro world of drag racing. I wanted to be the best, so if you want to be the best, you have to go wherever you need to beat the best."

## Always improving

Casler began competing in the early 2000s "when sleds sounded fast and smelled fast." His first race sled was an Arctic Cat ZRT



Aaron Casler from Des Moines details his racing career at the ISSA convention in Ames last November.

800cc two-stroke, and when that became too slow, he moved up to a 1000cc two-stroke.

By the end of the decade, he had graduated from triple cylinders to improved twins and found great success in the Pro 700 class in 2008 and the Pro 800 class in 2009. At the time, he said his sleds were "maxed out" at 200 hp, hitting 100 mph in 500 feet.

"I thought those sleds were the fastest things since sliced bread. They were quick, and I won everywhere I went," he said.

In 2012—the year he changed the name of his race team to 515 Racing—Casler also discovered turbo engines. Up to this point in his racing career, he had described turbo sleds "as dogs." An impressive pass on a Yamaha turbo changed his mind.

"I was one of those guys who said he would never do a two-stroke turbo because I thought they weighed too much and were too slow," he admitted. "Then I rode that Yamaha, and as I rolled into it, I realized it was a different power. It wasn't quick like my two-stroke ProStock. It was a grunt you could feel in your hands. I liked that. It was a different feeling."

## New challenges

Transitioning to the turbo class brought with it new challenges, new technology and new terminology. Casler admitted he was kind of lost at first, but thanks to the Internet and YouTube University, he was able to educate himself in a hurry.

"I'm not a mechanic by trade, so I didn't know much about turbos at the beginning," he said. "I didn't understand boost. I didn't understand what turbo lag was. I didn't understand what a wastegate did or what a blow-off valve was for. So I had to learn these things, and that was a steep learning curve for me. It was like a foreign language."

Casler and his team figured it out pretty quickly and began winning on a Hypersports Procross chassis. Casler covered the sled in a black snake skin wrap and named it Black Mamba after the fastest snake in the world. In 2014, he piloted Black Mamba to a 2014 Hay Days win in the Lakeracer/King of the Trail Turbo class, setting a world record time of 3.97 seconds in 500 feet.

More wins would follow. In 2016, he won the Outlaw Class at Hay Days, after which his team switched over to a full Hypers-

A colorful poster for the Kite Festival in Clear Lake, Iowa. The poster features a large, vibrant kite in the center, with a rainbow-colored tail. Text on the poster includes "Color the Wind KITE FESTIVAL Clear Lake, Iowa", "FEBRUARY 18, 2023", "11AM-4PM", and "CLEARLAKEIOWA.COM". There are also logos for "Clear Lake AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE" and a small kite illustration.

ports HRC race chassis. In 2017, he hit 144 mph at the Jack Race in Clear Lake, and this past October, he claimed the King of the Track title at the Central Iowa Snowmobilers grass drags in Grundy Center with a speed of 153 mph in 3.76 seconds.

### Competitive drive

Competition and the need for speed continues to motivate Casler and his team. He entered the Outlaw competition at Hay Days last fall hoping to at least reach 157 mph. With 1000 hp under the hood, he said he met his personal goal, but it wasn't good enough to win as everyone else was quicker out on the track. In fact, Dominck Ernst set a new world record in September at 3.287 seconds and 163.890 mph.

"Every year, it seems you have to be another 5 mph quicker," Casler said. "You have to continue to develop. You lose because you're not ready to go faster. We qualified at 157 mph at Hay Days, but everybody else went faster. They went 163 mph. That may not sound like a big difference, but it is. It's probably two lengths. So what do you do? You get on the computer and find more speed."

One area to squeeze out more speed is in weight reduction. Casler said he learned early on in racing that a lighter sled is a faster sled. His team saves weight wherever they can on Black Mamba. They use an external starter to fire up the engine and a battery from a cordless drill to power the sled's electronics.

"What makes the difference at the track is all of this prep ahead of time," Casler acknowledged. "Then, after each pass, everything needs to be touched on the sled before you can go out again. You



*Celebrating a past win.*

have to tear it down each time. You make one pass. That's one belt. You guys think replacing one belt a year is bad? Try changing one out after every pass."

The expenses quickly add up. Casler said he has more than six figures invested in his current Outlaw sled, and to finance his race program, he relies heavily on a bevy of sponsors. He said each new belt costs roughly \$150, and he is likely going to have to buy another new track this year. He had just stretched his track out to 159 inches, and now, a rules change allows for a 174-inch track. He said he has no choice.

"You have to do it to keep up, because the next guy will beat you otherwise," Casler rationalized. "Who wants to get third when you're racing? We don't ever want that. You don't go to a race thinking you are going to get beat. You go to a race trying to figure out how you are going to win. Or I'm not going to waste my time. It's all about the competition."

### Making a connection

Casler knows he couldn't feed his habit without the support of his family, sponsors and fans. All are welcome at his race hauler in the pits on race weekend. He said he appreciates the camaraderie and passion among his fellow competitors, and while he acknowledges the trophies and accolades are nice, he said he likes to feel he is making a contribution to the sport of snowmobiling through his exposure in the sport.

"Why are we here today? Why do we snowmobile?" Casler asked the crowd gathered at convention. "You know I've won a lot in a lot of different places. I love the competition, but I have also made friends from all over now, and it's like a reunion whenever we race."



*The 515 Racing team moves Black Mamba up to the starting line at the Central Iowa Snowmobilers grass drags in October.*

"It's everyone else around me who makes it fun," he said. "So, the next time you think about snowmobiling, think about how you can make it more fun. Pick up the phone. Get people to go with you. Make it fun for everyone."

"I'm always thinking about expanding the sport all the time," continued Casler, who is a member of the Saylorville Dam Snowmobile Club in Region 7. "We are the core snowmobilers in Iowa. We need to continue to bring younger kids into the sport and get more people involved. That's why I race. I race for the competition, but I also race for the people."

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2022 Endurance Ride from Eagle River to Phelps.  
Note the ISU entry on the far left.

# Clean Snowmobile Challenge Team Heads to Wisconsin Next Month

by Cameron Hanson

The Clean Snowmobile Challenge team from Iowa State University returns to Eagle River, Wis., next month for their ninth consecutive year of participation in the SAE competition of the same name.

Last March, the Ames-based engineering club competed in the Spark Ignition Class and brought home two awards: the Lowest In-Service Emissions and the Best Sales Presentation.

Known as Cyclone Snowmobile Engineering, the team shared their results with ISSA members during a Saturday afternoon seminar at the 2022 annual convention in Ames in November.

“We’re most proud of our finish in emissions,” Technical Director Carter Gauley said. “It’s one of the core parts of our club and one of the main reasons our club was founded.”

The challenge began in 1999 in response to snowmobile access issues at Yellowstone National Park. The contest relocated to Michigan Tech University in 2002 before moving to the World Championship Derby Complex last year.

Volunteering their time outside of class, teams are tasked with reducing the sport’s environmental footprint by curtailing emis-

sions, reducing noise and improving fuel economy on their project sleds.

The ISU team competes against other colleges and universities from across the Snow Belt. They are judged in 12 different categories with some presentations submitted virtually ahead of time and others completed in person at the three-day event.

“We put our sled to the test against a bunch of other schools from the across the nation and Canada, and we get to see where our sled stands,” Project Coordinator Dylan Yegge explained.

“We get judged on everything you can find on a snowmobile,” Gauley added. “We are trying to improve the market so it’s cleaner and more friendly and the sport of snowmobiling can continue well into the future.”

This year’s contest is planned for Feb. 7-9. While in northern Wisconsin, the team will test their sled in a 100-mile endurance ride, drag race to determine its rate of acceleration and place the sled under a load by pulling a 300-pound sled around the oval track to measure its emissions.

## Justifying the results

For the past several years, the team has modified a turbo-charged Arctic Cat ZR7000 for the CSC competition. Stripped down without emission controls, the “dirty” sled can produce 200 hp, but in competition, their “clean” version is restricted to 126 hp.

“We work very closely with Arctic Cat, and fortunately, they are pretty helpful with what we need,” Gauley said. “They want to see our power numbers go up, but they also want to see our emissions stay low.”

The team also partners with the Saylorville Dam Snowmobile Club in Region 7. For last year’s contest, club members served as the “voice of the consumer” and provided valuable feedback for the team’s sales presentation.

“During the sales competition, you’re just trying to justify what you did to your sled,” Legge explained. “We’re trying to keep this snowmobile as similar to a stock snowmobile that you can find at a dealership.”

“You take the starting MSRP for our sled and describe all the things you have added onto it,” added Project Director Jake Claus. “You have to justify what you’ve done and calculate how much it’s worth now and how much better it is. We have to determine the sale and value benefit for the changes.”

“We asked for the club’s input last year, and that was a lot of our motivation as to why we made the changes that we did to our



The ISU CSC team with their hardware for Best Sales Presentation and Lowest In-Service Emissions awards in the Spark Ignition Class at the 2022 competition at Eagle River, Wis.



2023 Project Director Jake Claus on the team's new Arctic Cat on display at the ISSA convention in Ames in November.

snowmobile," last year's Project Director Laura Paul said. "That was something that the judges really appreciated. That was a very big contributor as to why we scored so well in sales."

The team also takes inspiration from Saylorville club member and nationally-recognized drag racer Aaron Casler. From him, they've learned how far they can push

the boundaries of a sled in terms of weight reduction, engine tuning and horsepower.

Adopting the team as their home club, Saylorville Dam members also support the students financially through fundraising efforts. In addition to their own contributions, the club matches other club donations up to \$500 each year. In return, ISU students regularly attend Saylorville club meetings and volunteer each fall with trail clearing and marking.

Besides the support from Saylorville and Arctic Cat, the team at ISU also secures corporate sponsorships, including those solicited at Hay Days in September. The team also believes in outreach. In addition to the convention seminar, they also made the rounds to area grass drags this year, and, last June, they attended the International Snowmobile Congress at Dubuque.

"What's nice about coming to these events is we get to show you what we've been doing and what we're going to do," Yegge said. "We are very active with the Saylorville club and like helping out with their events as a way to give back to the community."

This year will likely be the last year for the team's ZR 7000 as they secured a factory-donated 2022 Arctic Cat Blast M 4000 in October. With its single-cylinder two-stroke EFI engine, the club likes the weight of the new sled but is not sure if they are



2022 Project Director Laura Paul visits with Jerry Hanson of the Minnesota United Snowmobilers Association at the 2022 International Snowmobile Congress.

going to swap out the motor for a larger turbo engine.

"We have a rough draft for our plans for the new sled, but all of these ideas are contingent up the rules of the competition," Gauley said. "We've talked about an engine swap, but we won't know until the new rules come out in December. We like the turbo. We know that works emissions-wise. It also performs great and is super efficient."




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